

HEROES OF WELSH HISTORY

David W
Oates





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Leander Central School

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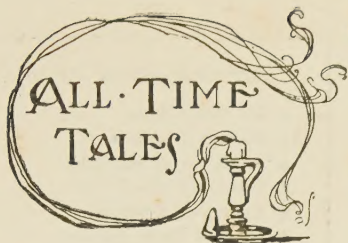
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HEROES OF WELSH HISTORY

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KING GRUFFYDD AND THE MONK.—Page 68.

Heroes of Welsh History

By

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"Heroes of Old Britain" "The Story
of Gwent" etc.

Illustrated by **STEPHEN REID**



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*Wales, Wales, where the past still lives,
where every place has its tradition, every
home its poetry, and where the people, the
genuine people, still know this past, this
tradition, this poetry, and live with it,
and cling to it.*

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Preface

THE aim of the following historical sketches is to present to young readers some idea of the way in which the torch of history has been handed on from age to age in Cymru. Their appearance is justified by a circular, recently issued to Welsh schools by the Board of Education, emphasizing the necessity for dwelling upon "Love of country as illustrated by the lives of eminent Welshmen. Our scholars," the circular continues, "should have examples put before them of the great men . . . that have lived in the past."

Heroes of Old Britain has already appeared in this series; the present volume brings the story out of the age of myth through the period of recorded history. Wales has an ancient, eventful, and inextricably complicated history; in this series of sketches a representative hero has been selected from each epoch, the incidents of whose life were capable of forming an interesting story of life amongst the Cymry.

The examples here presented of heroic daring and fortitude, of loyalty to duty, and of that passionate love of Cymru that made men dread treachery and dishonour more than they feared death, will colour the imaginations of young readers, and foster the elements of a fervid and robust civic patriotism.

Among the authorities consulted in the preparation of this little book, the author desires to acknowledge his indebtedness to the works of O. M. Edwards, Llywelyn Williams, M.P., Sir John Rhys, Owen Roscomyl and others, to which the reader is referred for a fuller account of the story of the Cymry than it is possible to present in these pages. Lady Guest's *Mabinogion*, the *Itinerary through Wales* of Giraldus Cambrensis, and Lord Lytton's *Harold* have been drawn upon, but of more importance is that greater influence, too subtle to be traced within the limits of paragraph, page or chapter, but which constitutes the unacknowledged and irredeemable debt under which all students of the works of the recognized historians must for ever remain.

D. W. O.

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WALES

OF THE
PRINCES

o Castles;
+ Abbeys or Priories.





I. Cunedda the Burner

LONG ago, in the far distant past, the Island of Britain was inhabited by a race of small, stunted savages. The Iberians, as these people have been called, penetrated far into the uninhabited wilds, hunting with rough weapons made of wood and stone the numerous animals that roamed in the dense forests; for they had no knowledge of the use of metals. Though they lived so long ago, long before history came to be written down, we have been able to learn a great deal about them from the remains we have found in the caves in which they lived and the graves where they buried their dead.

These people were not Celts, but traces of

their ancient features can still be seen in the small, but sturdy, dark people found in Wales to-day. After the Iberians had been settled in the land many years the first Celtic people, the Goidels, came among them. They were tall and large-limbed, and easily overcame the old stone men, for they had much better weapons which they had learned to make from bronze—a mixture of tin and copper. The Celts did not come all at once, and many generations after the Goidels had made their homes in the land they were disturbed by a stronger Celtic tribe who called themselves Brythons.

The Brythons were more civilized than the Goidels, whom they drove to the north and west of the island, and from them the people came to be called Britons and the island Britain. Although, as we shall see, power passed from their hands to those of succeeding races, the people of Wales to-day are descended directly from them, and their ancient tongue is still the language of Cymru.

The Britons were at last compelled to submit to the power of the Roman invader, though not without inflicting many a disastrous defeat during the long years when Caradog, the grand old British hero of whom you have read elsewhere, sternly defied the strength of Roman arms. When at length, after nearly four centuries,

Roman power was on the wane, and troubles at home compelled them to withdraw the Imperial forces from the distant mountains of Wales, another war-king, Cunedda, the great Brythonic soldier, rose to power in the land.

Three centuries before Cunedda's time Julius Agricola, the Roman general who completed the conquest of Britain, was continually troubled by the furious attacks of the wild Picts, who lived in the extreme north of the island. He pushed his way up into Caledonia, as that part of the land was then called, until he reached the narrowest part of the island, and then he erected a fortified wall between the Firths of Forth and Clyde to defend the Roman province against these wild attacks. The defence of the great wall of the north was one of the problems of Roman rule in Britain, and it is as keeper of the wall that we first hear of Cunedda. The family from which he sprang was already famous as a family of officials connected with the defence of the wall. His grandfather, Padarn of the Red Tunic, had probably held office under the Romans, and received his name from the fact that he wore the Roman purple.

The region of the wall was the scene of constant struggles ; time and again the fierce Picts broke through the wall and burned the forts.

Cunedda never slackened his efforts in its defence, beating back the enemies from the north with such vigour that the fame of his success went throughout the land. In this old meeting-place of warrior tribes the sword was never sheathed, and it was out of the gleam of flashing weapons that Cunedda the warrior came to the throne of Cymru.

In the confusion that followed the withdrawal of the Roman forces Cunedda was generally recognized as Gwledig, or war-leader, of the Britons in the north, and when strife arose among the tribes farther south, the sorely pressed Britons sent messengers to him to seek his help. He marched down from the north with his sons, and extended his rule to the Severn. While Vortigern, the leader of the Britons in the south of the island, was fast losing his power, Cunedda was strong enough to build up a great power, and to establish himself so firmly in the land that his race should never again be driven out.

Vortigern could not hold his own against the growing power of Cunedda, and he therefore called in the Angles to his aid. This was the first settlement of the Angles in the land ; they afterward conquered southward along the east of the island and gradually made England. The strength of Cunedda enabled him to lay the foundations of Wales, while the weakness of

Vortigern brought about the beginnings of the England of to-day.

Most of the inhabitants of the land we now know as Wales were Goidels, and these Cunedda either drove out of the land to Ireland or reduced to servitude, and the Goidelic language died out in the dominions he had conquered. He set his sons to rule over his frontiers, and then assumed the old office of Duke of Britain, thus uniting in himself the power of the Cymric Gwledig, or prince, and that of the old Roman office. If he knew how to fight he also knew how to rule, and soon succeeded in uniting the different tribes in the lands that he conquered. Under his guidance and protection the people began to have a new faith in themselves, and in this we trace the beginnings of the Welsh nation. Cunedda taught them the love of kindred, and loyalty to the chief of the tribe, but it took a very long time before the tribes became welded together into one nation fighting and working for love of their country as a whole, instead of for the glory of their tribe.

Cunedda kept his Court at Carlisle, where much of the old splendour of Roman rule remained. He wore the golden belt of office which had always been worn by the Roman ruler of Britain, and when he walked the old plume of feathers was carried before him. His

escort when he rode was a troop of nine hundred horsemen. In time of war the Golden Dragon was borne aloft before him; the national standard—the Red Dragon Rampant on a green ground—should always remind us of Cunedda the Burner, the first great prince of the Cymry, who marched to battle behind the Golden Dragon.

On his death, about the year 480, his son Ceredig became Gwledig after him. His sons and grandsons, from whom the princely families of Wales trace their descent, carried the conquest southward and gradually made Cymru. They are said to have given their names to the kingdoms left them by their father; the names of the Welsh counties—Ceredigion, Meirionnydd, etc., are therefore enduring monuments to the work of the valiant Cunedda.

A grand old hero, terrible in war, was this “chief of lion aspect.” “There is trembling from fear of Cunedda the Burner” sang the bards; and they describe him as “a fearless defender, fierce, dauntless, and irresistible, harder against his enemies than a bone.” Yet Cunedda, the fierce warrior, could be gentle, for they add: “The dogs raised their backs at his presence . . . and believed in his kindness.” Happy indeed was the prince who could claim descent from such an ancestor.

II. Taliesin, the Prince of Song

WHEN the Romans left Britain, early in the fifth century, the bards returned to the Courts of the chiefs, and began to sing again the praises of the British warriors. Of all the bards Taliesin, the "Radiant Brow," was the chief. He was born and educated amongst the rugged mountains of Wales, and by his wonderful songs, full of life, and full of spirit, he endeared himself to the hearts of the Cymry, and won from them the proud title, "Prince of Song." We know little of his real history, but many tales about him are related in ancient writings, of which the following is one of the most interesting.

On an island in Bala Lake there lived Tegid Voel and Caridwen, his wife. Their youngest son was very ugly, and Caridwen thought that he would not be admitted among men of noble birth, because of his ugliness, unless he were very learned. In order to make her son wise she set to work to boil a cauldron of knowledge. This cauldron had to be kept boiling for a year and a day, when three drops of magic liquid

would be formed, which would immediately make anyone who drank them very wise.

She placed a boy named Gwion Bach to stir the cauldron, and a blind man named Morda to kindle the fire beneath it, while she went daily to gather the herbs which she used to work her charms. One day, as the end of the year drew near, the three drops of magic liquid were formed, and fell out of the cauldron upon the finger of Gwion Bach. The drops were so hot that Gwion put his fingers into his mouth, and when he tasted the magic liquid he instantly acquired great wisdom. He now saw that he must guard himself against the wiles of Caridwen, and, knowing that she would be very angry when she returned, he fled in fear from the place.

The cauldron burst, and fell in two pieces, and the contents ran into a river and poisoned the waters so that several horses were killed through drinking thereof. When Caridwen returned and found that her year's work was undone, she became so angry that she struck blind old Morda on the head with a piece of wood. "Thou hast struck me wrongfully," he cried. "I am innocent; thy loss was not caused by me."

"Thou speakest the truth," said Caridwen, "it was Gwion Bach who robbed me."

She went in pursuit of Gwion who saw her

coming after him. As he now possessed magic power he changed himself into a hare, but Caridwen changed herself into a greyhound and continued the chase. As he ran toward a river he changed himself into a fish, but she became an otter and pursued him through the water. She was on the point of catching him when he took the form of a bird, but she instantly became a hawk and gave him no peace in the air. Just as she was about to swoop upon him and he felt that his last hour was come, he saw a heap of wheat on the floor of a barn, and, dropping down, he turned himself into a grain of wheat. Caridwen changed herself into a black hen and began scratching the wheat to find where he was, thinking that now she would surely catch him.

At last she found him, but as she was about to seize him he was changed into a very beautiful child. Caridwen then became a woman again, but, bad as she was, she could not slay the child; so she wrapped him in a leathern bag and cast him into the sea near the Dovey. The little child floated on the waters and was carried by the tide to a weir, near Aberystwyth, which belonged to Gwyddno, a prince of that part, and from the weir fish to the value of a hundred pounds was taken every May eve.

At that time Gwyddno had an only son,

Elfin, the most hapless of youths and the most needy. Now it grieved his father sorely, and by the advice of his council he granted his son the drawing of the weir that year to see if good luck would ever befall him. The next day Elfin went to look but there was nothing in the weir. As he turned back he perceived a leathern bag upon a pole in the weir.

“How now,” said Elfin, “there may yet be therein the value of a hundred pounds.”

They took up the bag, and when they opened it they saw the forehead of the boy and exclaimed, “Behold, a radiant brow !”

“Taliesin he be called,” said Elfin, and he lifted the boy in his arms and placed him sorrowfully behind him. Then he made his horse amble gently that before had been trotting, and he carried him as softly as if he had been sitting in the easiest chair in the world. And presently the boy made a poem in praise of Elfin, and foretold honour that should be his. This was the first poem that Taliesin sang.

Then they came to the house of Gwyddno, bearing the child with them. And Gwyddno asked Elfin if he had had a good haul at the weir, and he replied that he had got that which was better than fish.

“What is that ?” inquired Gwyddno.

“A bard !” said Elfin.

“Alas !” said his father, “what will he profit thee ?”

And Taliesin himself replied : “He will profit him more than the weir ever profited thee.”

“Art thou able to speak and thou so little ?” exclaimed Gwyddno.

And Taliesin replied : “I am better able to speak than thou to question me.”

“Let me hear what thou canst say,” said Gwyddno. Then Taliesin began to sing a song of the Creator. The Prince was astonished at the wisdom of the child, and when he had finished singing Gwyddno forgot his anger toward his son in his joy over Taliesin’s song.

Elfin increased in riches, and in love and favour with the Prince, his father ; and there abode Taliesin until he was thirteen years old. Then Elfin went by a Christmas invitation to his uncle, Maelgwn, who held open Court at this season in the castle of Deganwy. The Court was thronged with lords and knights and squires.

Now at that time the bards were in great favour with the princes, for they were well versed in the exploits of princes and kings, and in all matters concerning foreign kingdoms and the ancient things of this kingdom, and of these they sang their songs. There were at the feast in the Court of Maelgwn four and twenty

bards all singing the praises of the King. And a discussion arose among the knights and squires, and they put questions one to another amongst themselves: Who has braver men? Who has fairer and swifter horses or greyhounds? Who has more skilful or wiser bards, than Maelgwn?

When they had made an end of speaking, Elfin, stepping before them, said: "Of a truth none but a king may vie with a king, but I have a bard who is more skilful than all the King's bards."

In a short time some of the lords told Maelgwn all the boastings of Elfin. Then was the King mightily wroth with his nephew, and ordered him to be cast into a strong prison, and commanded that he should not be set free until he had proved the truth of his boast concerning the wisdom of his bard.

Now all this time Elfin's wife and Taliesin were joyful at home. When news was brought them that Elfin was in prison Taliesin bade her be glad, for he would go to Maelgwn's Court to free his master. Then she asked him in what manner he would set him free, and he answered her:

I, Taliesin, chief of bards,
With a sapient Druid's words,
Will set kind Elfin free

From haughty tyrant's bonds.
To their fell and chilling cry,
By the act of a surprising steed,
From the far distant north,
There soon shall be an end.
Let neither grace nor health
Be to Maelgwn Gwynedd,
For this force and this wrong ;
And be extremes of ills
And an avenged end
To Rhun and all his race :
Short be his course of life,
Be all his lands laid waste,
And long exile be assigned
To Maelgwn Gwynedd.

And Taliesin took leave of his mistress, and hastened to the Court of Maelgwn, who was sitting down to dine in his hall. As soon as Taliesin entered the hall he placed himself in a quiet corner, near the place where the bards and minstrels were wont to come in doing their service and duty to the King. At the moment when the bards and heralds came in to proclaim the power and strength of the King, as they passed the corner where Taliesin was crouching, he pouted out his lips after them, and played "Blerwm, Blerwm" with his finger upon his lips.

They took no notice of him as they went by, but walked forward till they came before the King, unto whom they made their obeisance

with their bodies as they were wont. Then, without speaking a single word, they pouted out their lips and played “Blerwm, Blerwm,” with their fingers as they had seen Taliesin do.

The King thought they were drunk, and commanded one of his lords to go to them and desire them to collect their wits, and to consider where they stood and what was fitting for them to do. But again and again they did the same thing before him, and at last the King ordered one of his squires to give a blow to the chief bard, and the squire took a broom and struck him on the head so that he fell back in his seat. Then he arose and went on his knees before the King and said: “Oh, honourable King, be it known to your Grace that not from strength of drink are we dumb, but through the influence of a spirit that sits in the corner yonder in the form of a child.”

Forthwith the King commanded the squire to fetch him. And he went to the nook where Taliesin sat, and brought him before the King, who asked him who he was and whence he came. And he answered the King in verse :

Primary chief bard am I to Elfin,
And my original country is the region of the summer stars ;
Idno and Heinin called me Myddin,
At length every king will call me Taliesin.”

When he had finished his song, the King and



HE STOOD NEAR THE DOOR SINGING HIS SONG

his nobles wondered much, for they had never heard the like from a boy so young as he. And Maelgwn asked him his errand, and the boy answered in song, and told them he had come to loosen Elfin out of his fetters.

And as he stood near the door singing his song denouncing Maelgwn, there arose a mighty storm of wind, so that the King and all his nobles thought the castle would fall on their heads. And the King caused them to fetch Elfin in haste from his dungeon and place him before Taliesin.

And, it is said, he began to sing again, and the chains fell from Elfin's feet. Thus he set his master free, and silenced the King's bards so that not one of them dared to say a word.

There is probably a good deal of truth in this very fanciful story which was related in the Middle Ages. We may gather from it that Taliesin was a native of that part of the country around which the tradition has grown up. Perhaps, having lost his parents, he was taken into the home of Elfin where he was brought up. While he made his home here Elfin was taken prisoner by his uncle, Maelgwn, Prince of North Wales, in one of the struggles which were common at that period, and imprisoned in the castle of Deganwy. The young bard, as an act of gratitude, addressed a poem to Maelgwn on behalf of his friend and protector, and the King,

moved by this appeal, set his prisoner free. Taliesin as a result of this act became a great favourite with Maelgwn.

When Taliesin left the house of Elfin he became a pupil of Cadog at his famous college in Glamorganshire, and while here he became acquainted with the bard Aneurin. About this time, too, he probably was introduced to Urien Rheged, a Cumbrian chief who had been driven by the Picts and Saxons to take refuge in South Wales. After leaving Cadog's college his time was probably divided between his friends, Maelgwn and Urien, to whom many of his poems were addressed. We know very little of his life, which was brought to an end about the year 570.

Nearly eighty poems which have descended to us are said to have been written by Taliesin, but many of them belong to the Middle Ages and are probably based upon fragments of his work by the monks, who could not resist the opportunity of reading into a simple old song of battle, or of a hero's death, a prophecy of events of that period. One prophecy relating to the old Welsh has been strikingly fulfilled :

 Their God they shall worship,
 Their language they shall retain,
 Their land they shall lose,
 Except wild Wales.

III. Maelgwn Gwynedd, the Island Dragon

MORE than a hundred years after the death of Cunedda, his great-grandson, Maelgwn, "The Island Dragon," was as powerful as he himself had been. While the invading Saxons were conquering the plains of England, Maelgwn was uniting the old Welsh who were now living in the broad strip of land running along the west of the island. His fleet watched over Môn and the seas that washed his coasts. From Deganwy, now a desolate spot overlooking the popular seaside resort of Llandudno, he marched his forces southward and forced the princes who ruled over the land to acknowledge him as chief, thus making Gwynedd the centre of British power.

He commanded all the chiefs who had submitted to him to assemble at Traeth Maelgwn, near Aberdovey, to decide who was to be King of the Isle of Britain. While they sat in their chairs upon the seashore they decided, so the old story says, to settle the matter in a very strange way. The chiefs were to sit in their

chairs on the sand, as the tide was coming up the Dovey, and the man who remained longest in his chair was to be recognized as King by all the rest.

Now Maeldav the Old had prepared for Maelgwn a chair made of waxed birds'-wings which would float upon the water. As the tide rose all the others were compelled to leave their chairs and hasten ashore to escape drowning, but Maelgwn continued to sit in his chair, which floated upon the surface of the waters, and thus, says the old story, he became King over all the chiefs of West Wales.

While they were under the rule of Maelgwn, the Britons of Wales and the North began to call themselves Cymry. Cymro means "fellow-countryman." The various British tribesmen were forced by a common danger to fight side by side under one Gwledig, or leader, first against the Picts and Scots, and afterward against the Anglo-Saxon invaders. They therefore used the name to show that they were brothers and comrades, and in this way it became firmly established among them so that their descendants to-day are known as the Cymry, and their land as Cymru.

We learn much about Maelgwn in the writings of Gildas, a monk of the sixth century, and the earliest native British historian. He tells us

that Maelgwn was greater than the other princes of Britain, both in build and in the territory over which he ruled. He spent his youth in warfare and violence, but after ruling as King for some years he began to think of his ways, and, according to the account given by Gildas, he became a monk, and went to study under the noted Cadog.

Gildas was sorely grieved on account of the wickedness of his time, and though Maelgwn had generously protected his family, he accuses him of being a most cruel and wicked ruler.

“ And likewise, O thou dragon of the island,” he writes, “ who hast deprived many tyrants, as well of their kingdoms as of their lives, first in mischief, exceeding many in power and also in malice, more liberal than others in giving, more licentious in sinning, strong in arms, but stronger in working thine own soul’s destruction. Maelgwn, why art thou foolishly wallowing in that black pool of thine offences ? Why dost thou wilfully heap, like a mountain, upon thy kingly shoulders such a load of sins ? Why dost thou show thyself unto the King of kings (who hath made thee as well in kingdom as in stature of body higher than almost all the other chiefs of Britain), not better likewise in virtues than the rest, but, on the contrary, for thy sins, much worse ? ”

And so the monk continues to condemn the victorious prince, afterward warning him in the words: "Woe to thee that spoilest, shalt thou not be spoiled?"

Gildas was unduly severe upon the prince of the Britons, probably because he had, after a short time, renounced the monastic vows he had taken, but that the accusations were in some part just is suggested by a story, which has been handed down to us, of a trick Maelgwn played upon Padarn, a bishop in Ceredigion.

Maelgwn knew that Padarn had considerable treasures stored at Llanbadan (near Aberystwyth), and resolved to obtain some of this wealth for himself. He therefore sent messengers to Padarn bearing several sacks which were filled with pebbles and moss.

The messengers delivered the sacks to Padarn, informing him that they contained the King's treasures. Maelgwn, they said, was preparing to engage in a war, and desired that these sacks of treasure should be placed in Padarn's keeping until he returned home again.

After some months had passed Maelgwn sent for the sacks, instructing his messengers to open them in the presence of Padarn in order to see that the treasures had not been interfered with while the sacks were in his keeping. When the sacks were opened and it was found that they



PADARN AND THE TREASURE

contained nothing but stones and moss, the messengers, according to the instructions they had received, behaved as though they were exceedingly angry. They openly accused Padarn of theft, and demanded that he should immediately fill the sacks with treasure.

This Padarn sternly refused to do, and it was decided that his guilt or innocence should be proved by means of a trial by ordeal. Cauldrons of boiling water were prepared, and Padarn and his accusers were ordered to plunge their arms into the water. When the allotted time had passed their arms were examined. Padarn's limbs were quite healed, but those of his accusers still showed no signs of healing. Thus was the innocence of Padarn made clear, and Maelgwn was forced to confess his trick.

One of the strangest parts of his strange history is the manner of his death. Toward the close of the sixth century the Yellow Plague swept over the whole island. The ravages of this terrible pestilence were fearful; thousands died, and many people fled in fear across the sea to Brittany to found new colonies there.

In order to escape the pestilence, it is said that Maelgwn fled in terror from his castle at Deganwy to the Church of Llanrhos near Llandudno, where he hoped to remain shut up

in the sanctuary safe from all danger. One day, moved by curiosity, he peeped out through a grating and saw the yellow monster coming toward him. Thus he caught the infection and died, fulfilling the prediction of Taliesin :

A most strange creature will come,
From the sea marsh of Rhianedd,
As a punishment of iniquity,
On Maelgwn Gwynedd ;
His hair and his teeth
And his eyes being as gold ;
And this will bring destruction
On Maelgwn Gwynedd.

IV. Rhodri the Great

IN the eighth century a formidable enemy arose on the borders of Wales and forced the Cymry to unite under a common leader. Three able and ambitious kings—Ethelbald, Offa and Cenwulf—all of them bitter enemies of the Welsh, ruled Mercia in succession. The great Offa captured Pengwern (now Shrewsbury), Hereford, and much land along the Severn, and then caused a dyke to be made from sea to sea as a boundary between him and Wales, to enable him the more easily to withstand the attack of his enemies. This great ditch, with a raised embankment on the English side, traces of which may still be seen after more than a thousand years, was a wonderful piece of work for the men of those days. Cenwulf, who followed Offa, taking advantage of the endless dissensions amongst the Welsh princes, penetrated far into Wales.

At last a ruler appeared in Gwynedd who was strong enough to bring nearly the whole of Wales under his control, and to unite the Welsh princes in a way that had not been known in the land

since the coming of the English. This was Rhodri Mawr, Rhodri the Great, son of Mervyn the Freckled. He inherited Gwynedd from his mother, Powys from his father, and received South Wales with his wife, Angharad. For this reason he was the first prince who was acknowledged as Brenin Cymru Oll, King of all Wales.

The common foe that threatened both England and Wales at this time was the Danes, who opened their attack on Wales by burning St David's in the year 810. At first they came in small bands to harass towns and villages on the coast. Many of the monasteries were built on the fruitful land near the shore, where the monks could till the soil and reap rich harvests. They were specially chosen for attack, for, not only did the heathen Danes hate the Christians, but they also knew that in such places they might hope to find rich spoil. Running their ships ashore, they attacked, plundered and burnt a monastery or village, and hastened back to their long black boats before the people could collect in sufficient numbers to overcome them.

In course of time, however, they changed their methods of attack, and crossed the sea in large numbers fully resolved to settle in the land. In their homeland they spent their days fishing and hunting, and the constant exposure to storms and severe hardships made them the

most untiring and daring warriors. Fighting was their one interest in life, and they were therefore the most pitiless and savage enemies, slaying even the women and children when once the fight began. The Cymry dreaded the fury of the Northmen so greatly that "From the dark heathen, deliver us, good Lord," was their constant prayer.

For some time the Welsh princes were so busily engaged in their own quarrels, and the land was so full of confusion that but little was done to check the Northmen. But now, in the hour of need, Rhodri arose as a leader to unite the Welsh against their new foe. Even in the presence of this common danger the struggle between the Welsh and the English of Mercia did not cease. The brave Rhodri was not discouraged or dismayed by this twofold attack, but boldly led his army forth against both the English and the Danes. Ethelwulf, the father of Alfred the Great, attacked the Welsh host so vigorously, however, that Rhodri was compelled to acknowledge defeat.

Mona was ravaged by the Black Pagans in 853, and from the wide estuaries of the Dee and the Severn they made incursions along the shores, and penetrated far into the land. A short time afterward a Danish host under Horm sailed toward Wales, after ravaging the coasts of

Ireland, and effected a landing in Anglesey. Rhodri united all the princes to drive out the Danes, and marched against the invaders with a powerful army. So bravely did the Cymry fight, under the leadership of their distinguished chieftain, that they won a great victory, and Horm, the Danish leader, was slain.

They were not long to enjoy peace, however, for the Danes, having strengthened their position, returned to the attack, and Rhodri was once more compelled to organize his forces against the invaders. This time the Northmen were more successful in their warfare, and pressed Rhodri so hard that he was forced to flee as a fugitive to Ireland in 876. Two years later Danish successes drove the English Alfred into hiding in the fastnesses of Athelney. These two rulers, both surnamed "Great" by their people, were the only two who were strong enough to make a determined attempt to check the Danish onslaught. But while Alfred, in his exile, spent his time planning how he might overthrow the Danes and regain his power, Rhodri was soon induced to accept the terms of peace they offered, and returned to Wales as the ally of the Danes.

The men of Mercia were quick to recognize the danger of this alliance, and in the next year marched an army to Anglesey, where Rhodri

and his brother were slain in a battle for which they were unprepared. The Welsh mourned the loss of their great leader. Three years later his sons avenged his death by the decisive defeat of the Mercians at Conway; the Welsh called this victory over the English "God's revenge for Rhodri."

Amongst the many acts of this great ruler was the introduction of a new system of government, of which the following account is given in the chronicles:—

"Ceredigion he gave to Cadell, his eldest son; his court to be at Dinevor. North Wales he gave to his Anarawd; his court to be at Aberffraw, in Anglesea. Powys he gave to his Mervyn; his court to be at Mathraval. The eldest of these he enjoined to pay a tribute to the King of London; and to the eldest son the other two were each of them to pay tribute also. These were called the three diademed princes, because they, contrary to all that preceded them, wore frontlets about their crowns, like the kings of other countries, whereas, before that time, the kings and princes of the Welsh nation wore only golden chains. Rhodri settled sovereignty on the eldest of the three supreme diademed princes; with a request and commandment that they should defend and protect Cambria, and its people, against

assaults of enemies, and against all anarchy and disorder.”

On his death, therefore, his dominion became divided among his three sons ; Anarawd received Gwynedd, Cadell had Deheubarth, and Mervyn became King of Powys. The scheme which Rhodri had devised was in accordance with the old British custom which divided an inheritance equally amongst all the sons instead of handing it on undivided to the eldest son. This was not a good thing for Wales, because the division of the kingdom undid all the good work that Rhodri had done to bring about unity, and caused bitter quarrels amongst the brothers.

No great ruler arose from among the sons and grandsons of Rhodri. In their struggles for the local independence which they sought, they lost sight of Rhodri's great dream of a united and powerful Wales. They sacrificed national unity and strength in order to satisfy petty personal pride of position. From among them, however, in those days of warfare and anarchy, arose Hywel Dda, the great lawgiver of his race.

Rhodri the Great was an able ruler who made his power felt throughout the length and breadth of the land, and in the dark years of warfare and unrest he proved himself one of the most

distinguished chieftains and warriors of his age. His claim to rank as a hero of the race rests chiefly, however, upon his fame as the first prince of the whole of Wales. He dreamed of national greatness, and taught men to think of Cymru as a compact and powerful nation—powerful because united. When we hear the word Cymru to-day, our minds should go back in admiration to the old hero prince, who first strove toward that definite kingdom of Cymru which is still the pride of all Welsh hearts.

V. St David

IN the sixth century, during the period of peace that followed the battle of Mount Badon, there were many famous religious teachers among the Welsh. St David was the chief of them, and he and his followers travelled to the wild, far-off corners of the hills, where there were still people who had not heard the Gospel story, teaching and labouring hard to drive out the old belief in the cruel gods of the heathen.

St David, or Dewi Sant as the Welsh prefer to call him, lived so far back that it is difficult to see clearly through the mist of years, and almost impossible to speak with certainty upon events so far remote. Much of the history of the far-distant past is enveloped in clouds of mystery through which we can penetrate only by means of the legends that have been handed down to us. They did not write many books in Wales in David's time, for very few people could read. Stories about important people or interesting events were related by one person to another; these stories became more strange and more wonderful every time they were

related, and in this way many of the legendary stories that have been handed down to us grew. We must therefore, when reading the accounts of David's life, endeavour to penetrate through the wonderful legends to the events that actually happened.

St David was born near the village in Pembrokeshire that now bears his name but was then known as Mynyw or Menevia. The Welsh people rejoiced at his birth, believing that he was sent from heaven to compensate them for the heavy losses that the Saxon hostility had brought upon them. His birth was foretold to St Patrick in a vision, thirty years earlier, so one legend records. He was born on a bleak cliff overlooking the sea, that, at the time, was tossed about by a violent tempest, but the immediate spot where the saint was born enjoyed all the brightness of a summer's sun.

He came of noble parentage, his family on both sides being renowned for that same purity of life and holy zeal which ultimately exalted him to the place of honour in the hearts of his kinsmen for all time. Sande, his father, was the son of Ceredig, a descendant of Cunedda, and the first prince of Cardiganshire. This helped to make the young lad popular with the people. His mother, Non, was descended from Vortigern,

the celebrated King of South Britain who discovered Merlin.

At his baptism, we are told, a spring gushed forth and has since been known as Ffynon Dewi, David's font or well, while an aged blind man who held the child had his sight miraculously restored. David grew up a fair and noble youth, full of modest grace and piety, and at an early age his parents decided that his life should be consecrated to the service of the Church. He commenced his education under Iltutus, probably at Llantwit Major, where he was instructed in the Psalms, the Lessons and the public prayers. Leaving here, he went to study under Paulinus, who had founded a college at Ty Gwyn ar Daf in Carmarthenshire. David continued with Paulinus for ten years, during which time, we are told, so great was his modesty and piety that he gave himself up to studying the Scriptures, and never once looked up into the face of his master.

One day the aged Paulinus became blind, and called all his pupils to him in order that they might examine his eyes to see if anything might be done to restore his sight. Nothing they were able to suggest did him any good, and at last they called David to him. "Holy David," he said, "look at my eyes for they pain me very much."

"My father," answered David, "do not order



DAVID AND THE AGED PAULINUS

me to look at thy face ; for here are ten years during which I have given up myself to instruction in the Scriptures with thee, and I have not yet looked on thy face.”

Touched by the modesty of the boy, Paulinus replied : “ Since it is so, it will be sufficient if, touching, thou wilt bless mine eyes, for I shall be cured.” And when David touched the eyes of his aged master, continues the story, they instantly were cured, and thanks were given to God.

The time now drew near for David to go out into the world to practise all he had learned. He went amongst the Welsh hills helping the poor, and teaching men to live unselfish lives. Wherever he went he gathered men together, and taught them to live as he did, and to preach his message to the people.

At length, desiring only seclusion for study of the Scriptures and for meditation, he retired to the Valley of Rhos, near his native place, and here he gathered round him a few of his holy companions and built a monastery that became very celebrated. The monks in David’s monastery were clothed in coarse garments, and were unfailing in obedience to his commands. They worked zealously at their tasks, for “ Who laboureth not, let him not eat ” was their first rule.

When their tasks were finished they devoted themselves to prayer and meditation, and no sounds of idle talk disturbed the peace of the monastery. At evening, when the bell was heard, they made their way in silence to the church, and here they remained on their knees until the stars appeared in the sky. When all the monks had left the church David would often remain alone in the darkness.

They all met at table, and when they had refreshed themselves with their plain meal they retired once more to the church to watch and pray. When this was done they were allowed to go to bed, from which they rose again at cock-crowing, once more to kneel in prayer.

The British Church at this time was assailed by false doctrines, and a great synod or council was held at Llandewi Brevi, in Cardiganshire, to refute the heresies that had crept into the Church. David preached frequently at Llandewi Brevi, and as it was a very central place with several of the old Roman roads leading to it, and many valleys opening out from the plain, the people could assemble together there from all directions without difficulty.

One hundred and eighteen bishops, we are told, besides kings and princes, were gathered together. “No voice, not even the sound of a

trumpet can reach the ears of them all," exclaimed the bishops, when they saw the large company that had assembled to hear the preaching. At last it was decided that they should form a pulpit in the open air by raising a heap of clothes on a piece of high ground, and whoever, standing thereon, should make his voice heard by all the people, and rid their minds of the false teaching, should be made Archbishop.

One bishop after another preached to the assembly, but only those who were near were able to hear. Many consultations were held, until at last the aged Paulinus arose in the midst of the assembly and said: "One is not yet present at our synod, but there is a man, eloquent, full of grace, approved in religion, one to whom the angels are kind, beautiful in countenance, elegant in form; invite him, therefore, by my advice."

Messengers were sent to David without delay, but at first he refused to come. "How can I do what others are unable to do?" he exclaimed humbly. When news was brought to the synod that David had refused to join them, Dubricius, the Archbishop, accompanied by Deiniol, Bishop of Bangor, hastened to the monastery, and speedily won him to their cause, so that he consented to accompany them to the assembly.

He was received with all honour, his fame having gone before, and all the nobles strove to offer him the first greeting. They invited him to stand upon the heap of clothes, but he refused, and, taking a handkerchief which a lad offered him in jest, he placed it upon the ground and, standing upon it, began to preach to the multitude.

While he was speaking, says an old legend, a snow-white dove descending from heaven sat upon his shoulders. Then the earth on which he stood raised itself under him until it became a hill, and, standing on the top, he was seen by all as on a high mountain, from whence his voice was heard like a trumpet, and he was understood by all both near and far. His eloquence and his arguments won the hearts of the people, and they left the assembly confirmed in the faith. As a reward for his efforts, David was made Archbishop of Caerleon by the consent of all the bishops and nobles.

A poet, writing some three hundred years ago, says that David withdrew from Caerleon to the Valley of Ewias, between the Hatteral Hills in Monmouthshire, and—

Here in an aged cell with moss and ivy grown,
In which, not to this day, the sun hath ever shone,
That reverend British Saint in zealous ages past,
To contemplation lived.

David did not remain long at Caerleon, for, obtaining permission from the King, he removed the seat of the Archbishopric to Menevia, the home he loved so well. The reason for this change is said to be that he disliked "the frequency of people at Caerleon." It was probably due, however, to the irresistible approach of the Saxon power that drove the Welsh farther west.

At Menevia he found the peaceful quiet for the study and contemplation that he so dearly loved, though he did not allow his love for seclusion to interfere with the duties of his high office. Some years later he called another synod or council at Llandewi Brevi to draw up a code of laws for the future guidance of the Welsh Church. This undertaking met with such success that the assembly was termed the Synod of Victory.

His last years were spent in tranquillity, and he died peacefully in the monastery at Menevia. Many beautiful stories were related of him which we cannot recall here, but the legend of his death is too beautiful to omit.

An angel appeared to the aged David and said: "The day thou hast long desired is now near at hand. Prepare thyself and get ready on the Calends of March, for our Lord, with a great host of angels, will come to meet thee."

When they heard these words the brethren were sorely grieved, and sorrow filled the city. "David, our Bishop, take away our sorrow," cried the people. And he, pacifying and comforting them, said: "Brethren, be constant; the yoke you have taken, bear until the end; and whatsoever you have seen or heard keep and fulfil."

The news spread throughout the land, and a large concourse of people, like bees on the approach of a storm, hastened to visit the holy father. On the Sunday he preached, for the last time, to a great multitude of people. He was seized with faintness, but he blessed the people, and addressed them, saying: "My brethren, persevere in those things which ye have learned of me. On Tuesday the first of March I shall enter the way of the fathers. Fare ye well in the Lord; we shall see each other no more in this world."

These were his last words. On the Tuesday, at the time of cock-crowing, says the old chronicle, the city was filled with sweet fragrance and with angelic choirs singing celestial songs. When morning broke the saintly David gave up his life to God, and, accompanied by the angelic host, departed to the heavenly country.

The lamentation of the people was terrible to hear. "Who will now help us?" cried the

people. "Who will now be our teacher?" cried the scholars. "By whom shall we be ordained?" cried the kings. The voices of the mourners were as one: kings mourned for him as a counsellor and a dear companion; the old bewailed him as a brother; the young honoured him as a father, and all revered him as they revered God.

Undoubtedly David was a great man who did much good. He was a fine preacher, and the large crowds that came to hear him readily received his instruction. "In that age it was usual for people to gather in crowds for purposes of war only. It was a sign of improvement in the habits of the people when they gathered for the purpose of hearing a saintly preacher like Dewi; for Dewi's preaching softened their manners and improved their morals."

He was, in the words of Gerald the Welshman, "a mirror and pattern to all, instructing both by word and example; excellent in his preaching, but still more so in his works. He was a doctrine to all, a guide to the religious, a life to the poor, a support to orphans, a protection to widows, a father to the fatherless, and a model to teachers; becoming all to all, that so he might gain all to God."

His shrine became so famous that three English monarchs—William I, Henry II and

Edward I—are said to have made pilgrimages to it. In the twelfth century his nation began to speak of him as a saint, and raised him to the honour of the patron saint of his race. March the first is still kept as a holiday by Welsh people, in commemoration of the death of Saint David. On that day the people wear the leek to show that they are Cymry, and their hearts thrill with pride when they recall the deeds of great Welshmen.

VI. Hywel Dda the Lawgiver

NOT long after the death of the English Alfred, a Welsh prince who also won great fame as a lawgiver began to reign in South Wales. Hywel Dda, or Howel the Good—for such was the title his countrymen gave him—reigned over Dyfed, a kingdom of South Wales, and in his later years he ruled over North Wales also. He stands pre-eminent among the distinguished princes of Wales, like Alfred the Saxon, as a hero of peace. His reign, unlike that of his grandfather, Rhodri, was a time of comparative quiet for the Welsh nation, and his triumphs were those of peace, not of war.

During the years of warfare and the long struggle of one petty prince with another, the old code of laws and customs of Wales had been forgotten. Now that the turbulent times were over, and the Welsh nation for a time enjoyed peace, Hywel sought to restore law and order to his people. Alfred the Great, following the example of Charles the Great, had collected the laws of his nation, and Hywel soon set

to work to collect and reconstruct the old Welsh laws.

Far in the past, before the birth of Christ, Moelmud, a British ruler, is said to have drawn up a code of laws and privileges of the Cymry. A copy of these laws in Latin was presented to King Alfred by Asser the Welsh monk and proved of great assistance to him in the work of compiling his famous laws. Welshmen had forgotten the laws of Moelmud, but Hywel remembered them and took them as the basis of his new code of laws.

He soon saw the abuses which were common in Wales on account of the uncertainty of existing laws, and lost no time in carrying out the plans which he had in his mind for the benefit of the country. He first called a great council at Ty Gwyn ar Daf—the White House on the Taff—now Whitland in Carmarthenshire. This council was composed of four of the wisest men from each district, together with the bishops and all the chiefs of the tribes in the principality.

The national council was called together at the beginning of Lent, and the whole forty days of Lent were spent in fasting and prayers, craving for Hywel, according to an old Welsh historian, “the assistance and direction of God’s holy spirit, that he might reform the laws and

customs of Wales, to the honour of God and the quiet government of the people.”

When Lent was over and these solemnities were at an end, Hywel gave instructions that the twelve wisest and most experienced men should be chosen from the assembly in order that, with the assistance of the Archdeacon of Llandaff, the most learned scholar and lawyer of that age, they might proceed to choose and arrange the ancient laws of the country.

A great labour the collection and writing of them proved to be. When the work had been done the laws were brought and read before the assembly, by whom they were adopted. Hywel then gave the laws his sanction, and solemnly declared that the curse of God and of all Wales should rest upon all who should violate the laws as well as upon those by whom they might be corruptly administered.

Three copies of the laws were then made—one for Hywel himself, one to be kept in his palace at Aberffraw, and the third to be placed in his house at Dinevor. Other copies were made from the “Old Book of the White House” as time went on.

Hywel’s scheme was still incomplete, for he had determined to give additional weight to his code of laws by obtaining for them the sanction of the Pope. He therefore set out for Rome

accompanied by the Archbishop of St David's, two bishops and thirteen learned men. The laws were read in Latin before the Pope and received his approval, and the Welsh lawgiver and his attendants returned in safety to Wales.

A second meeting of the national assembly was called and the laws were read to them a second time. When they had signified their assent the laws were proclaimed throughout Wales, and the code of Hywel Dda continued to be observed as the only law of the land until Wales lost her independence in the time of Edward I.

Some of these laws are very interesting, for they give us a glimpse of what life was like in those far-off days of early Wales. The subjects of the King were commanded to build him palaces at his pleasure and to maintain the royal household by means of tributes and taxes.

This was a heavy burden, for, according to the laws, the royal household was to consist of the master of the palace, domestic chaplain, steward of the household, falconer, the judge of the palace, the master of the horse, the chamberlain, the bard, master of the hounds, the mead-brewer, the cup-bearer, physician of the household, door-keeper, cook, sconce-bearer, groom of the rein, an officer to command silence, an officer to support the King's feet at a banquet,

a bailiff, gate-keeper, watchman, woodman, baker, palace - smith, laundress and chief musician.

The judge occupied a position of great honour, sitting next to the King. When he was appointed the King gave him an ivory chess-board, and the queen a gold ring. He sat in the hall by day, and slept there on the King's cushion at night, as a sign that justice might be had in the King's Court at all times. He had to take an oath that he would never pass an unjust sentence, and if he were proved guilty of this offence he was punished by losing his office and by having his tongue cut out. By a strange custom the judge received the tongues of all animals killed for food in the royal household, while the eyes of the animals were given to the King's watchman.

The falconer or master of the hawks "has his lodging in the King's barn, lest his birds should be injured by the smoke. He must bring his vessel to the palace to get drink in it ; for he ought only to quench his thirst lest his birds be injured by neglect. He is entitled to a stag in October and the skin of a hind in May, to make gloves to train his hawks."

A very peculiar office was that of the foot-holder, who " must hold the King's foot in his lap, from the time he begins to sit at banquet

until he goes to sleep ; and he must rub the king ; and during that space of time he must guard him, lest he should suffer any misfortune. He has the privilege of eating upon the same dish with the King, with his back towards the fire.” Though he might have a dish for himself “ he is not to join in the feast.”

A curious law was that which fixed the fines which were to be imposed for hair-pulling. “ Whosoever shall pull a person’s hair, let him first compensate for the insult and pay a penny for every finger that touches the head, and twopence for the thumb ; and a legal penny for every hair pulled by the root from the head ; and twenty-four pence for the front hair.”

The laws laid it down that every Cymro might demand a training to fit him for life. On his fourteenth birthday, when he came of age under the law, the lad was taken to the chief of the tribe to receive his training. The chief first took the scissors and cut the hair about his brows, then for seven years he was trained to fight in defence of his land, and taught to plough, to sow, to reap, and to do all such things as would make him a skilful farmer.

His training was a period of severe hardships. He was given hard tasks to perform, and exposed to rain and storms in order that he might be hardy, fearless and capable of feats of great

endurance. The aim of every true Cymro was to stand undaunted before every danger, and unwearied by the greatest hardship, so that he might end his life fighting for his land and his people; any other death was reckoned a disgrace.

When his training was completed he returned to his tribe, and then he might marry and make his home. What a happy man was the old Cymro, able to supply his frugal wants from the land he cultivated and the flocks he reared, and ready and eager to take up his weapons to defend the home he loved so well.

In all the affairs of their daily life the laws helped the natives of Wales. Hywel, perhaps the most enlightened Welsh monarch, had the highest interests of his country at heart. He chose to do his utmost to remove the abuses which his people suffered and to improve the condition of his country rather than to waste his energy in waging war upon foes outside.

The long and peaceful reign of Hywel Dda came to an end in 948. His powerful hand and heroic spirit put an end to dissension and turmoil amongst the petty chiefs of the land, but when death removed him the old strife was rekindled and his four sons met their end in the bitter struggles that soon broke out in Wales.

VII. Gruffydd ap Llywelyn

ON the death of Hywel Dda the land of the Cymry was once more given over to bitter warfare, but we can pass over the years of bloodshed and sorrow until another hero-king arose in Wales. Gruffydd ap Llywelyn was in some ways the strongest Cymric ruler since the great Cunedda fell. Listen how one of the old chronicles speaks of him: "He set himself to work goodness to his country and people. He defended them from foe without, and from the pillage and anarchy of lawlessness within. And laws he made, fair and just, to save them from wrong."

Llywelyn, his father, had been a good ruler and a strong king, but Gruffydd had a hard struggle to gain the throne after him, and other princes ruled in Wales before he succeeded, after much fighting, in bringing his countrymen under his rule. Gruffydd was a strong leader, and one would have thought that so valiant a prince would have had nothing to fear from other claimants to the throne, but, as a matter of fact, he had

enemies within his country as well as foes without.

The princes of Gwynedd, Deheubarth and Morganwg, considered themselves more nearly entitled than Gruffydd to be King of all Cymru. They therefore took every opportunity that presented itself of combining against him, hoping to remove him from the throne. We shall see how, at last, their opportunity came, and how they succeeded in bringing about the death of the old hero Gruffydd.

Gruffydd became King of Gwynedd in 1039. The aims he set before him were to unite Wales once more under the rule of Gwynedd, and to extend its boundaries to the Dee in the north and to the Severn in the south, by recovering the lands that had been seized by Mercia and Wessex. In the first year of his reign he led his army against the men of Mercia who were making inroads upon the land, plundering towns, villages and farms. The armies met at Rhyd-y-Groes (Crossfield) on the Severn, in Montgomery, and there Gruffydd won a great victory that secured Gwynedd against Mercian attacks for many years.

In the same year he turned his arms against the south to begin the great task of his life—the winning of the rest of Wales. The rulers of the south refused to accept him as King, and one

prince after another arose to dispute his claim. After sixteen years fighting Gruffydd ap Rhydderch, the last prince who opposed him, was slain in 1055, and Gruffydd ap Llywelyn became ruler of all Wales.

When this task had been accomplished Gruffydd began to think once more of the Saxon enemies who harassed the borders of his land. About this time Alfgar, the son of the Earl of Mercia, had been banished from the country and came to Gruffydd to seek his aid against the Saxons. They determined to march against Hereford, but on approaching the city they found the Saxons lying in wait for them. Gruffydd attacked them without delay, and after a short but hard struggle the Saxons, unable to withstand the fierce attacks of the Welsh, took to flight, and Gruffydd won a complete victory. The Welsh army, pursuing the Saxons, entered the city, and, after plundering the cathedral, set fire to the place and retired loaded with rich booty.

Harold, Earl of Wessex, the real ruler of the Saxon kingdom, marched against Wales to punish Gruffydd and Alfgar. He recaptured Hereford, but did very little against the Welsh King, and was forced to restore Alfgar to the Earldom of Mercia in order to secure peace. In the following year the Bishop of Hereford

marched out against the Welsh King, but he was slain and his army routed, and for some years the land enjoyed peace.

Gruffydd, however, could not long remain idle while his plan to push forward his frontier to the Severn remained unaccomplished, and he marched his army against the Saxons. Harold now determined to overthrow the power of the Welsh ruler at all costs, for he feared the existence of so strong an enemy. He advanced against the Welsh with all the force of his kingdom, and, thinking to capture Gruffydd, he marched on his palace at Rhuddlan, but though he destroyed the palace and burned Gruffydd's fleet in the Clwyd, the Welsh ruler, having heard of Harold's approach, escaped by ship.

Harold now set to work in a slower but surer way. He himself set sail from Bristol with a strong fleet to ravage the coast and prevent any assistance coming from Ireland, while his brother, Tostig of Northumbria, led a powerful army into Gwynedd, and devastated the land with his swarms of Northumbrian cavalry. Gruffydd was thus attacked on all sides, and as his forces were not strong enough to resist these attacks he endeavoured to hide himself amongst the heights and ravines of the mountains of Gwynedd, in the hope that he might attack the invading forces as they retired and throw them into

confusion. Gruffydd, ever dauntless and resolute, refused to yield, though the great distress and suffering among the Welsh threatened to shake the allegiance of his people. Now the enemies within the nation of whom we have already spoken began to see that for which they had long waited. What were the victories Gruffydd had gained over the Saxons to them? What was it to them that he had restored to the Cymry lands that had been lost since the days of Offa? He kept them from what they wanted, he stood between them and the throne, and now their hour had come, for the tribesmen might easily be persuaded to purchase peace and relief from their distress with the blood of their brave-hearted leader. Gruffydd awaited a messenger from the Saxon host, and now was the time to put their scheme to the test.

Down the pass the company of the King moved slowly to meet Evan the Welsh monk and Mallet de Graville, the messengers from Harold. First came the chiefs, who were privileged to attend the King, bearing on high the tattered lion-ensign that Gruffydd had raised. Behind, long lines of spears rose above the jutting crags, while near at hand were the traitor chiefs, closely watching every movement of the King. The King advanced towards the Norman knight, who thrilled with admiration

at the erect bearing of the Welsh hero. Though his robes were worn and ragged, and his attendants ghastly with famine, his manner and bearing marked him as the bravest leader the Cymry had known since the days of the great Rhodri.

“Speak, father or chief,” said the Welsh King in his native tongue. “What would Harold the Earl of Gruffydd the King?”¹

“Health to Gruffydd ap Llywelyn, his chiefs and his people,” answered the Welsh monk, who acted as spokesman. “Thus saith Harold, King Edward’s thane. By land all the passes are watched; by sea all the waves are our own; our swords rest in our sheaths; but famine marches each hour to gride and to slay. Instead of sure death from hunger, take sure life from the foe; free pardon to all, chiefs and people, and safe return to their homes—save Gruffydd alone. Let him come forth, not as victim and outlaw, nor with bent form and clasped hands, but as chief meeting chief with his household of state. Harold will meet him in honour at the gates of the forts. Let Gruffydd submit to King Edward, and ride with Harold to the Court of the King. Harold promises him life, and will plead for his pardon. And though the peace of this realm and the fortune of war forbid Harold to say, ‘Thou shalt yet be King,’

¹ Based on Lytton’s *Harold*.

yet the crown, son of Llywelyn, shall at least be assured in the line of thy fathers and the race of Cadwalladr shall still reign in Cymru."

The faces of the famished chiefs lit up with hope when the monk had finished speaking, and the traitors hastened back to bear the message to the warriors above. The King's countenance flashed with anger, and pride in his nation filled his heart as he stepped towards the monk and answered him in a loud voice whose rich echoes rolled far up the hills.

"Monk ! thou hast said ; and now, hear the reply of the son of Llywelyn. King was I born, and King will I die. I will not ride to the side of the Saxon, to the feet of Edward the son of the Spoiler. I will not, to purchase base life, surrender the claim of my line and my people. Say to Harold the Saxon, ' You have left us but the tomb of the Druid and the hill of the eagle : but freedom and royalty are ours in life and in death—not for you to demand them, not for us to betray.' Go back, false son of Cymru, and tell Harold to look well to his walls and trenches. We will vouchsafe him grace for his grace ; we will not take him by surprise, nor under cloud of night. With the gleam of our spears and the clash of our shields we will come from the hill, and, famine-worn as he deems us,

hold a feast in his walls, which the eagles of Snowdon spread their pinions to share."

"Rash man and unhappy," cried the monk. "What curse drawest thou down on thy head? Wilt thou be the murderer of thy men in strife unavailing and vain? Heaven hold thee guilty of all the blood thou shalt cause to be shed."

"Hush thy screech, lying raven," exclaimed Gruffydd, his eyes darting fire. "Once priest and monk went before us to inspire, not to daunt, and our cry, 'Alleluia!' was taught us by the saints of the church on the day when Saxons, fierce and many as Harold's, fell on the field of Maes Garmon. No, the curse is on the head of the invaders, not on those who defend hearth and altar. By the land they have ravaged, by the gore they have spilt, on these crags, our last refuge, I launch the cause of the wronged and the doomed on the children of Hengist! They, in turn, shall know the steel of the stranger, their crown shall be shivered as glass, and their nobles be as slaves in the land. But we, though weak in the body, in the soul shall be strong to the last; the ploughshare may pass over our cities, but the soil shall be trod under our steps, and our deeds keep our language alive in the songs of our bards."

The impressive speech and wild gesture of the King filled the monk with awe. The spearmen

and multitude above, excited by the tidings of safety to life, and worn out by repeated defeat and the dread fear of famine, too remote to hear the King, were listening eagerly to the insidious addresses of the two stealthy conspirators creeping from rank to rank; and already they began to sway and move in the direction of the King.

The Norman, recovering from his surprise, again neared Gruffydd to urge once more his mission of peace. But the chief warned him back sternly, shouting: "Messengers, ye are answered. Withdraw, and speed fast, that we may pass not your steps on the road."

The retirement of the messengers was the signal for one burst of remonstrance from the chiefs—the signal for the voice and the deeds of the traitors. Down from the heights sprang and rushed the angry and turbulent multitude; round the King came the bard, the falconer, and a few faithful followers.

Suddenly above the hubbub was heard the voice of the King, in accents of menace and wrath, singularly distinct and clear; it was followed by a moment's silence—a moment's silence followed by the clatter of arms, a yell, and a howl, and the indescribable shock of men. And suddenly again was heard a voice that seemed like that of the King, but no longer distinct and clear.

All was hushed, and the spears stood still in the air, when there was again the cry as multitudinous, but less savage than before. Down swarmed the Welshmen, nearer and nearer to the Norman knight, and in the midst of them the traitor chiefs. The old chief bore in his hand a pole or spear, and on the top of that spear, trickling gore step by step, was the trunkless head of Gruffydd the King.

“This,” said the old chief, as he drew near, “this is our answer to Harold the Earl. We will go with you.”

And so, says the chronicle, “Gruffydd lost his life, and he and his father were the noblest princes that had been in Cymru till that time ; and the best for bravery and war, and for peace and for government and for generosity and justice ; and by their wisdom and understanding they united Gwynedd and Powys and Deheubarth, so that the Cymry were strengthened against all enemies and strangers.”

VIII. Owain Gwynedd

OWAIN GWYNEDD first saw the light at the close of the eleventh century. Gruffydd ap Cynan, his father, unlike most of the Welsh princes, lived to be an old man, and during his reign had made Gwynedd, which extended from the Dee to Holyhead, and from the north coast to the borders of Powys and Cardigan, so powerful that Welshmen were proud to call his heir Owain Gwynedd.

In spite of the triumphs that marked the long reign of Gruffydd, Owain his son was destined to become a much more powerful ruler. "I will extol the generous hero descended from the race of Roderic," sang one of the bards, "the bulwark of his country ; a prince eminent for his good qualities and the glory of Britain ; Owain the brave and expert in arms ; a prince that neither hoardeth nor coveteth riches." As a lad he had often gone raiding in the Marches with his brother Cadwalladr, and as soon as he succeeded his father he showed that he would not hesitate to engage in fighting whenever the opportunity offered.

During the reign of Henry I many natives of the Low Countries had been driven from their houses by the flooding of their lands, and a large number of these exiles came to Henry to beg a settlement in his dominions. Henry rejoiced at this opportunity of placing amongst the Welsh a colony of men that might prove of assistance to him in his plans against their country, and without further question allotted to them a large tract of land along the coast of Pembroke-shire. The Flemish settlers soon became a source of great misery to the Cymry, and Owain, with his brother Cadwalladr, marched an army into South Wales against the foreign settlers.

They destroyed the castle of Carmarthen, and then pressed on into Cardigan, capturing the castles of several Norman barons and completely routing their adversaries. Many of the foreigners were driven from their settlements and the Welsh restored to the lands that had been taken from them. Owain and his brother, having thus, in a great measure, fulfilled their object, returned to North Wales in high favour, bearing with them in great glory much plunder.

Soon after this Owain was greatly distressed by the death of his son Rhun, to whom he was devoted. He was a youth of very amiable disposition and possessed of great personal accomplishments, and Owain, filled with fatherly

pride at the high promise of his son, had looked forward to the day when Rhun should become a great and powerful prince worthy of his nation. So great was Owain's grief that nothing could console him. He took no interest in passing events, and seemed to live only in the remembrance of his loss.

Owain was roused from his stupor at last by the stern necessity of marching against the English. For some time they had been strengthening their possessions in the Marches, where they had erected several fortresses that provided a protection for their lands and proved a great annoyance to the Welsh. Of these castles that at Mold was the strongest, and though the Welsh attacked it again and again its walls still stood defiant against the stoutest assault.

The English at this time were engaged in the bitter strife between Matilda and Stephen, and the border lords—the Lords Marchers—who fought hard for Matilda, had their hands too full to pay much attention to the Welsh. This was too good an opportunity for Owain to lose, and he determined to be avenged upon the occupiers of the castle for the many ravages which they had committed upon the lands of the Cymry.

Filled with the prospect of so fair a prize, Owain marched his army to Mold and laid siege

to the castle, but the garrison repulsed his fiercest assaults with such spirit that hope of success was fast vanishing. Owain's perseverance, however, did not waver, and at last, urging on his men by the example of his own energy and exertion, the castle was stormed. Its walls were razed to the ground, and those members of the garrison who had not fallen in its defence were made prisoners. This victory so raised the spirits of the prince that grief oppressed him no more.

The English resolved to revenge themselves on Owain, and Randulph, Earl of Chester, prepared to invade Wales. He raised a large army of English, and was joined by a prince of Powys who was jealous of Owain's power. The dauntless prince met the invading army near Flint, and, contrary to his custom, made the first onset, though Randulph's forces were more numerous and better armed than his. So vigorous was the attack that the English sought safety in flight, and so keenly were the fugitives pursued that the swiftness of their horses alone enabled any of them to escape alive.

The English for many years ceased their attempts to keep North Wales in subjection, but Owain was not free from trouble for long. The conclusion of a struggle with foes without was

the signal for the renewal of those bitter feuds within the country that were so frequent during this troubled period. In one of these unnatural contests Owain was guilty of an act of such cruelty and inhumanity that it will always remain as a dark blot upon his irreproachable fame.

On the death of his brother Cadwallon, Cunedda his son succeeded to his rights and property, but Owain resolved to seize these possessions for himself. A Welsh law declared that no man who suffered from a physical or mental defect should be a prince of the Cymry; he therefore had Cunedda's eyes taken out and otherwise maimed him in a merciless fashion. It is impossible to reconcile this act with the otherwise heroic character of the Welsh prince; such barbarity, unparalleled in the annals of Welsh history, cannot be overlooked, and deserves no excuse.

Owain's attention was once more drawn from these dissensions at home by the dangers to which his dominions were exposed on account of English activity. He had driven Cadwalladr, his brother, from the country, and the exiled prince, together with Madoc ap Meredydd of Powys, urged Henry II to take up arms against Owain. The English King therefore marched an army into Wales in 1156, and encamped near

Chester where he was joined by as many Welshmen as the offended princes could muster.

The Prince of Gwynedd was prepared for this attack, and, with his usual vigour, marched his army to Basingwerk on the Dee to give battle to the invading force. Henry sent a chosen body of troops to endeavour to dislodge the Welsh from their posts, but this detachment had not long left the main body when they were attacked in the trackless wood of Coed Eulo by David and Conan, two of Owain's sons, who assailed them so strenuously that they fled in terror to the royal camp.

The English King, enraged by this reverse, marched his army along the seashore to Flint, intending to throw himself into the rear of Owain's forces and so cut off the Welsh from their supplies. When marching through a narrow and difficult pass he was attacked by Owain himself. Advance or retreat was difficult when the Welsh rushed out upon them with terrible shouts, and, dismayed by this unexpected attack, and hampered by their heavy armour, the English were soon thrown into disorder.

Suddenly the King's standard-bearer, sharing the general terror, threw down his banner and cried aloud: "King Henry is slain!" The alarm spread until the King revealed himself

by throwing up his helmet, and in this way succeeded in rallying his forces and leading them back to the fight. Owain was now unable to withstand the English attack, and was forced to withdraw to a spot near St Asaph, called, from this event, Cil Owain or Owain's Retreat. Henry marched on to Rhuddlan, where he erected a fortress, and Owain was forced to make peace upon terms unfavourable alike to himself and to the nation. He and his chiefs were to do homage to the English King, while he was to restore the exiled Cadwalladr to his possessions, and to deliver two of his sons to the English King as hostages for his good behaviour.

In 1164 so serious was the trouble in Wales that Henry for a time gave up his quarrel with Thomas à Becket and his military preparations in Normandy, and collected his army to march a third time into Wales. He encamped with a vast army at Oswestry, thinking that the strength of his forces would cause some of the Welsh princes to desert Owain and so compel him to submit without fighting. But in this he had misjudged the Welsh, for against the English host marched the warriors of all Wales. With Owain were Cadwalladr his brother, all the men of Deheubarth led by the Lord Rhys, and all the princes of Powys.

The English forces were defeated in a skirmish

at Oswestry, but followed the Welsh as they withdrew into the mountain fastnesses of their country. In the Glyn of Ceiriog the Welsh skirmishers slew many of Henry's picked men, and when he reached the Berwyn Mountains the host of the Cymry was still before him to harass him in many ways. Even the elements seemed to war against him, for a period of very bad weather added to the great difficulties which confronted him.

A terrible storm swept over the Welsh mountains, that made every brook a rushing torrent, and every pathway a treacherous bog. Worn out with the cold and wet, wearied and exhausted through hunger, and harried at every step by the Welsh skirmishers, the English army was forced to retreat to the plains. Henry, thus compelled to abandon his projects, gave way to a fit of ungovernable passion. In his hands were two of Owain's sons, and two sons of Rhys of Deheubarth, whom he held as hostages. In revenge for the disaster that had befallen him, he had the eyes of these poor lads put out and their faces mutilated. Thus ended the last attack which Henry of England led against Owain and the Cymry.

Owain survived this struggle but a few years, during which time he cleared every castle out of Gwynedd. This grand old hero of Wales

died in 1169, and found a resting-place in the cathedral church of Bangor. For thirty years he had defended his country against English attacks, and he left it in such a state of peace as it had rarely before enjoyed and was not now destined long to enjoy.

Owain Gwynedd was one of the most valorous and successful warriors that ever ruled in Cymru. Yet, while we admire him for the resolute courage and unwavering patriotism which he displayed as a ruler, we cannot but condemn the weakness in his nature which made possible the brutal treatment of his nephew Cunedda. In spite of this foul blot upon his fame he remains as a valorous warrior, distinguished leader and ardent patriot, without a superior in the history of his country, and as a guardian of Welsh independence his fame will shine forth as a beacon-light to all generations.

IX. The Lord Rhys

AFTER the death of Owain, the Lord of Snowdon ceased to be the central figure in Welsh history, and during the last quarter of the twelfth century the Lord Rhys, who ruled over the whole of Deheubarth in the south, became more important than the chiefs of Gwynedd. Rhys was the son of the gallant Gruffydd the Wanderer whose valour had secured the kingdom of Deheubarth against the Norman onslaughts, and to the valour of his father he added the wisdom of his uncle, Owain Gwynedd.

While Owain ruled the land Rhys had entered heartily into his uncle's campaigns, and had performed valiant deeds against the Norman lords in the south. He had fought side by side with Owain against Henry II, had helped the Lord of Gwynedd to reduce Powys, and had shared with him the struggle at Rhuddlan. Now that his uncle was removed from the fight Rhys determined to carry on the great work for which he had laboured. The hills and plains of Deheubarth were far more open to the attack

of a regular army than the mountainous Gwynedd, but while Rhys was at a disadvantage with regard to the country over which he ruled, there were circumstances at this time which favoured his plans.

In the year 1170 the great Norman barons of the south crossed the sea to join in the conquest of Ireland under Richard Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke. Rhys was thus freed for a time from their enmity, and left at peace to strengthen his position. The chiefs of South Wales all acknowledged him as their King and leader, and he ruled all the land from the Dovey to the Bristol Channel as the firm friend of Gwynedd. The only danger that threatened his power, therefore, was the presence of the Norman barons.

They had erected their strong castles at the mouths of the rivers which flowed through the fertile valleys into the heart of his kingdom. They were thus in such a favourable position for attack that they would have shattered the independence of Rhys without difficulty, if he had not been a great ruler and warrior.

Rhys had learned by experience that as often as he might overthrow the power of a Norman lord, and demolish his castle, the defeated Norman sought the aid of the King, who restored him to his lands, and rebuilt and strengthened his castle. He saw therefore that, in order to



THE MEETING OF RHYS WITH KING HENRY

carry out his plans, the help of the King of England was indispensable, for while Henry stood as the protector of the Norman lords no warfare could succeed against them.

When the King passed through South Wales, following the path of those who had gone to Ireland, Rhys therefore marched to meet him, and not only succeeded in retaining the whole of his dominions, but also became Henry's firm ally. During the critical struggle which the King waged with his sons and the rebellious barons of England, Rhys gave him valuable support, and sent a body of Welsh troops to assist him. The King, pleased with his allegiance, appointed him his Justiciar—that is, Justice or Preserver of the King's Peace—for South Wales. The Cymry had named him Rhys Mwyn Fawr—Rhys the Greatly Courteous—but because of the office he held he became famous as the Lord Rhys.

In order to settle a dispute which had arisen between some of the Welsh chiefs and their Norman neighbours, Henry called a council at Gloucester to which the disaffected Welsh chiefs, including Seisyll of Upper Gwent and Iorwerth of Caerleon, followed the Lord Rhys. Peace was arranged, and in return for their submission the King granted them pardon. The Normans gave up their claim to Caerleon, which was

restored to Iorwerth; and Abergavenny Castle, which Seisyll had seized, was restored to the Norman De Braose.

Then followed one of the most treacherous acts recorded in history. De Braose, acting upon Henry's orders, so Gerald informs us, declared that the arrangement of peace should be celebrated in a fitting manner, and invited a number of the chief men of the district to a banquet at his castle. Not suspecting his motive, a large number assembled, and at first he treated them with great hospitality. In the middle of the feast his treacherous purpose was revealed when he arose and informed them that, in future, they should not bear arms, and required them to take an oath to that effect.

The Welsh chiefs became furious when they perceived the treachery of which they had been made the victims, and indignantly rejected his suggestion. A signal then being made, a number of armed soldiers, who had been stationed in the castle for the purpose, rushed into the hall and fell upon the Welshmen. So complete was the massacre that Iorwerth alone escaped. Then, not satisfied with this bloodshed, De Braose proceeded to the castle where Seisyll dwelt. Here he seized Seisyll's wife Gladys, sister of the Lord Rhys, and her son, and they shared the fate of the murdered chiefs. This treacherous

act made peace between the English and the Welsh in this corner of Wales impossible for many a long day.

The death of Henry II made the Lord Rhys more powerful still, for Richard the Lion Heart was too fully occupied with thoughts of the Crusade to care about Wales. Rhys feared no more the wrath of the King, and when, in 1196, the Normans, encouraged by the revolt of his sons, invaded his territories, the brave prince marched to the attack "like a lion of furious heart, with a mighty band," and, in the words of the old chronicle, though the Normans "marshalled their armed forces of cavalry, equipped with helmets and shields, unawares against the Cymry," yet Rhys "heroically set upon his enemies, and turned them to flight, dealing vengeance on them scornfully."

While Rhys ruled, the White Monks began to build their monasteries in the land. Wherever they went they won the love of the people ; their earnestness and the strictness of their life soon gained for them the deep respect of the Welsh. The Lord Rhys looked upon them with favour, and gave them broad lands in the neighbourhood of Ystrad Fflur, where they established the famous monastery of Strata Florida.

We should be thankful that the Lord Rhys befriended the monks, for they were the chroniclers who wrote down *The Chronicles of the Princes* without which many pages of our history would be blank. In spite of the errors which crept in, it was a wonderful old book, written with loving care and great patience upon the sheets of yellow parchment. As the story of the Welsh princes draws nearer their own day it is fuller and more vivid. Its pages breathe the spirit of liberty, and give us living glimpses of the old Cymric heroes who loved and fought for that liberty.

The time of Owain and Rhys was also a period when famous poets sang in Wales. If the country was poor in other things it was rich indeed in music and poetry. About this time the famous *Black Book of Carmarthen*, a volume of poems, now the oldest Welsh book in existence, was written. At this time too Gwalchmai and Cynddelw were chanting the praises of the brave Welsh heroes to the sounds of the harp, which was heard in every hall; and Hywel the Tall, son of Owain Gwynedd, was composing his fine verses in praise of the beauties of his native land.

There was a national passion for music and poetry. Children were taught to sing from their infancy, and the harp, the *crwth* (a kind of

violin) and the pipe were heard in the homes throughout the land. Around the hearth fire, where the folks were gathered in the long winter evenings, the harp was passed from hand to hand, and songs of the brave deeds of the great heroes of Cymry were sung until the night was far spent.

In order to encourage the bards the Lord Rhys held a great eisteddfod in his castle at Cardigan, and he himself presided. The assembly had been proclaimed throughout the country a year before it was held, and all the most eminent bards and minstrels in the land were gathered together to compete for the prizes. The competition was keen, and enthusiasm ran high. In the end, the men of South Wales won the chair offered for musicians playing upon the harp, violin and flute, while the chair for poetry went to the men of North Wales.

In the year 1197 the Lord Rhys was laid to rest at St David's, and all the sons of Wales mourned the loss of him who had been, in the words of the Chronicler of Strata Florida, "the head, and the shield, and the strength of the South, and of all Cymru; and the hope and defence of all the tribes of the Britons."

The Lord Rhys was the only ruler in the south who built up a great power for himself after the Norman Conquest. The commanding

position which Llywelyn the Great was able to occupy was, to a large extent, the result of the work of Owain Gwynedd and the Lord Rhys. Though we may trace some weakness in Rhys' schemes, we shall all agree, when we think of his valour as a leader, his wisdom as a ruler, and the encouragement he gave to the arts of peace as well as those of war, that his fame entitles him to rank as one of the great heroes of his race.

X. Gerald the Welshman

IN the long line of Cymric heroes—great warriors in their crested helms whose gallant deeds drew men's hearts out after them—we come at last to one who, though he never brandished sword in battle, yet laboured worthily to carry on the unquenchable spirit of the Cymry which has made their history so famous. Gerald was descended on one side from the Norman Gerald of Windsor, and on the other from Nest, the fairest and sweetest princess in Welsh history, the fame of whose beauty and charm went through the land, causing princes and rulers to wage long and fierce war for love of her.

Gerald, half of Welsh, half of Norman descent, was, by this very mixture of his blood, the child of his age, when race was mixing with race. The Cymry hailed him as Gerald the Cymro, the proudest title they could give him, but the Normans named him Giraldus Cambrensis, and in this Latin form they speak of him in their writings. Gerald, both in his character and in the interesting story he relates, marks the

meeting and mingling of Welshman and Norman.

He was born about the year 1147 at Manorbier Castle in Pembrokeshire, the home of his father William de Barri. His love for his home is an example for the sons of all nations. He loved the spot with all his heart ; hear his own words : “ As Dyved is the fairest part of the land of Wales, as Pembroke is the chief and fairest part of Dyved, and this spot, Manorbier, is the sweetest of all Pembroke, it follows that Manorbier is the sweetest spot in Wales.”

Gerald tells us the story of the happy times he spent playing with his brothers on the sands below the castle, but while they built sand-castles he built a sand church. One day, when danger of invasion threatened the land, young Gerald fled to a neighbouring church, considering it more secure than any fortress, however strong, could possibly be. These early indications of his taste attracted the attention of his uncle David, Bishop of St David's, who undertook to provide for his education, and placed him in the hands of his chaplains to learn Latin and other lessons.

When he had learned all he could from his uncle's chaplains, he was sent to the Abbey of St Peter at Gloucester to continue his schooling, and from there he went to Paris to study at its

famous college. He was a handsome youth, and applied himself so diligently to his studies that he became one of the foremost scholars of his time. On his return to Wales it is not surprising, therefore, that the Welsh Church was eager to receive him into its ranks. He became a Canon of Hereford, and Rector of Chesterton in the county of Oxford, but his love for the land of his birth soon brought him back to Wales and he was appointed Archdeacon of Brecon. Gerald entered the Welsh Church gladly; he was eager to live and to work for it, and throughout his life he fought strenuously as the champion of the Church in Wales and of St David's.

His uncle, the Bishop, was content to let things go their own way, but Gerald fought hard to make St David's an archbishopric, free from the influence of the English Church and the control of Canterbury. On the death of his uncle in 1176 Gerald, though still a young man, hoped to succeed him as Bishop of St David's. The electors of the diocese nominated him, and the Archbishop of Canterbury favoured his election. Henry II, however, refused to confirm the appointment and called upon the canons to elect Peter de Leia, declaring that the acknowledged integrity and ability of Gerald, united with his noble birth, might have an injurious effect upon the supremacy of England in ecclesiastical affairs.

Gerald then returned to Paris to continue his theological studies, though, in spite of his expressions of satisfaction with the King's decision, motives other than the love of study may have induced him to leave Wales at this time. On his return he found the diocese of St David's in the greatest confusion on account of the opposition to Peter de Leia. He succeeded in restoring it to some order, and remained to labour for the good of his beloved church for three or four years.

At last he became so disgusted with some of the Bishop's acts of interference that he resolved once more to quit Wales. We next find him acting as chaplain to the King at the English Court, where he won great favour. Henry II praised him in lavish terms for his "good conduct, modesty and fidelity," and, as a mark of confidence, appointed him to accompany his son John to Ireland as his secretary and confidential adviser. Gerald was now in a position to win sympathy and support for his schemes, but the only use he seems to have made of his residence in Ireland was to collect materials for his two books on that country.

In 1187 news reached England that Saladin had captured Jerusalem with its treasures and relics. The people of Western Europe were greatly excited at the news, and speedy prepara-

tions were made to effect its recovery. Henry II proclaimed the crusade, and sent Baldwin, the Archbishop, to preach it in Wales, appointing Gerald to accompany him. Baldwin, however, had a more practical aim than preaching a crusade ; his first consideration was to establish his authority over the Welsh Church by celebrating mass in the four Welsh cathedrals.

Gerald was probably appointed by the King to accompany the Archbishop because he was known as the champion of the Welsh Church, and his presence would remove any opposition which might have been offered to the English Archbishop. It is very fortunate for us that Gerald was one of the party, for he wrote an account of the journey through Wales, full of vivid pictures and strange stories, from which we may learn many things about the people and events of those far-away days.

The Primate and his party entered Wales near Hereford, and then went on to Brecknock. Passing through the wild pass of Coed Grono they reached Abergavenny. We cannot, however, here follow them in their travels, we must leave that until we can read Gerald's own interesting account. The preachers seem to have met with a splendid reception, and many of Gerald's countrymen, among them several of the chief nobility, flocked around the standard

of the cross. Gerald at times, however, seems to have forgotten their mission in his eagerness to describe the interesting places through which they passed.

Here is Gerald's account of the people who lived in Wales in the days of Owain Gwynedd :

“ This people is light and active, hardy rather than strong, and entirely bred to the use of arms ; for not only the nobles, but all the people are trained to war, and when the trumpet sounds the alarm, the husbandman rushes as eagerly from his plough as the courtier from his court. They pay no attention to commerce, shipping, or manufactures, and suffer no interruption but by martial exercises. They anxiously study the defence of their country and their liberty ; for these they fight, for these they undergo hardships, and for these they willingly sacrifice their lives. They esteem it a disgrace to die in bed, and an honour to die on the field of battle.

“ It is remarkable that this people, though unarmed, dare to attack an armed foe ; the infantry defy the cavalry, and by their activity and courage generally prove victors. They make use of light arms, which do not impede their agility, small coats of mail, bundles of arrows and long lances, helmets and shields, and more rarely greaves plated with iron.

The higher class go to battle mounted on swift and generous steeds, which their country produces ; but the greater part of the people fight on foot, on account of the marshy nature and unevenness of the soil.

“ In time of peace the young men, by penetrating the deep recesses of the woods and climbing the tops of the mountains, learn by practice to endure fatigue through day and night, and as they meditate on war during peace, they acquire the art of fighting by accustoming themselves to the use of the lance, and by inuring themselves to hard exercise.

“ Not addicted to gluttony or drunkenness, this people, who incur no expense in food or dress, and whose minds are always bent upon the defence of their country and on the means of plunder, are wholly employed in the care of their horses and furniture. Accustomed to fast from morning to evening, and trusting to the care of Providence, they dedicate the whole day to business, and in the evening partake of a moderate meal ; and even if they have none, or only a very scanty one, they patiently wait till the next evening ; and neither deterred by cold nor hunger, they employ the dark and stormy nights in watching the hostile motions of their enemies.”

Such were the splendid old fighters of Wales

—men in whom love of country was supreme. In 1198 Peter de Leia died and the electors of St David's again chose Gerald to be their Bishop. Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, immediately opposed his election, and the matter was referred to the King, who was at that time in Normandy. Richard gave orders that four members of the Chapter of St David's should appear before him, but died before they could arrive. John, who succeeded him, received with favour messages from St David's on behalf of Gerald, and even gave instructions that he should be brought before him, but on the King's arrival in England the hostility of the Archbishop prevailed and Gerald's appointment was again defeated.

The Pope was at that time the head of the Church in Western Europe, and Gerald saw that in his support lay the only chance of success, for with a single word the Pope could restore the independence of the Welsh Church. He therefore made immediate preparations for the journey to Rome, and, after placing his books in the care of the monks of Strata Florida, he set out with his companions. When they reached France they found a war in progress that barred their path and exposed them to constant danger. The difficulties and dangers that confronted them caused his companions



GERALD AND THE THIEVES

to turn their steps homeward, but Gerald would not think of turning back, and, pressing on alone, at length reached Rome in safety.

The Pope received him cordially and accepted a copy of his works. "Others have given you money," said Gerald, "but I give you books." The Archbishop of Canterbury had taken care to send a messenger in order to forestall Gerald, and the Pope, thinking more of maintaining his power over England than of the justice of Gerald's cause, put him off with the promise of a commission to try the case in England.

Gerald returned to Wales and spent his time collecting more evidence, which he presented to the Pope. At last the commissioners pronounced against him, and the King declared him a rebel and an outlaw. In defiance of all difficulties and dangers he set out to plead his cause with the Pope once more. Peril threatened him at every step, but his brave Welsh heart could not be discouraged. Making his way with difficulty through England, he reached the coast, where he lay in hiding for many days, seeking some vessel to carry him across the channel. On his journey he fell in with thieves and was robbed, but still he struggled on. He reached the Alps in the depth of winter, but even now his courage did not fail him, and, crossing the mountains

buried in the deepest snows, he at length reached Rome.

Once more did he plead his cause in vain, and the King ordered that the Bishopric of St David's, which had been unoccupied for five years, should now be filled by a new appointment. Gerald returned for the election of the new Bishop, and at length, finding that many of the Welsh clergy, during his absence, had been won over to his adversary, the Archbishop, by bribes and threats, he resigned the Archdeaconry of Brecon in favour of his nephew, and retired to spend the remainder of his life in studious seclusion. Several of his countrymen, among them the chieftains of South Wales, recognized his right to the position for which he had sighed so long, but from which, in the end, the Pope's decree had excluded him, and therefore conferred upon him the honorary title of "Bishop elect."

He died about the year 1222, but the place of his burial is not known. The figure of Gerald stands out strikingly in the stirring scenes of Welsh life in the Middle Ages, and his fame as a champion of Welsh independence will live to all time. He fought single-handed against all the power of the Church outside Cymru, and though in the end he lost, and the four Welsh dioceses fell into the power of Canterbury, his efforts

brought about important results. He taught the Welsh princes to rally round and support the national Church of Cymru, he opened the eyes of the Welsh Church to a consciousness of its unity, and he encouraged the Welsh people to regard the Pope as a great protector of the just cause of the weak and oppressed to whom they might appeal.

The most brilliant man of letters of his day, a man of great courage and daring, he spent the strength of his energetic life in seeking to accomplish an impossible task. No hero merited greater fame, and no warrior received greater praise than was given him by Llywelyn the Great : “ Many and great wars have the Cymry waged with England, but none so great and fierce as his who fought the King, and the Archbishop, and the might of the whole clergy and people of England, for the honour of Cymry.”

XI. Llywelyn the Great

AFTER the death of Owain Gwynedd we do not hear much of North Wales for a time ; Owain's kingdom was divided among his four sons, and the Lord Rhys, as we have read in another chapter, became the most powerful Welsh ruler. But even while Rhys ruled, a grandson of Owain, though only a lad of twelve, was beginning to urge his claim to the throne of Gwynedd. The young lad was destined to become powerful enough to win, both from the Welsh and the English, the proud title, "Llywelyn the Great."

Iorwerth, his father, had been set aside on account of his broken nose, for the Welsh law declared that no prince who was disfigured should become king ; but, at the same time, the law did not bar Llywelyn's way to the throne. Iorwerth had been driven from Gwynedd by his brother, and had taken refuge with Iorwerth of Caerleon, the sole survivor of the massacre at Abergavenny, of which you have read, and in this remote corner of the land, in all probability, Llywelyn was born. When he was old enough

the young lad marched an army into Gwynedd to drive out his uncle, David, and in 1194 he began to rule over part of that land. The Welsh, from the first, marched as one man to his support, and by 1201 he ruled the whole of North Wales.

Then Llywelyn remembered that, under the laws of Hywel Dda and Rhodri the Great, all Welsh princes were obliged to acknowledge him as their lord, and to do homage to him for their lands. He determined, therefore, to summon them to do homage to him as Prince of North Wales. Most of them came dutifully before him, but one of them, Gwenwynwyn, Lord of Powys, sternly refused to submit. Only one course lay open to Llywelyn; Gwenwynwyn was therefore driven into exile and Powys added to Llywelyn's dominions. The sons of Rhys, who were fighting over their father's dominions in the south, threatened trouble at first, but Llywelyn won them over and they afterwards became his staunchest supporters.

John, King of England, soon saw what manner of man this prince, who had risen to power, was, and thought it wise to make an ally of this new ruler who was going to carry all before him. Peace was therefore arranged, and John cemented it by giving Llywelyn his daughter Joan in marriage and the lordship of Elsmere

in the Marches as a dowry. How strange the English princess must have felt in the small Welsh Courts at Aber and Aberffraw after all the pomp and majesty of the English Court.

At first this arrangement worked smoothly, and John assisted Llywelyn against Gwenwynwyn. But the King could not long be trusted, and soon it became evident that Llywelyn was too powerful a vassal and son-in-law to please John, who now supported Gwenwynwyn against him, thinking to seize part of his kingdom. At last he brought his army into Wales, vowing vengeance on the men of Gwynedd.

John marched his motley army of English and Welsh along the sea-coast from Chester, but when they reached Deganwy they found that Llywelyn had prepared to receive them. All the Welsh of those parts had removed with their flocks and herds to the inaccessible mountains which frowned before the invading host. In the meantime Llywelyn, by means of a flanking movement, had placed himself between the English army and the borderland to cut off all supplies. The English were soon in difficulty, and the soldiers were reduced to eating horse flesh. "A fine banquet it was if they got horse flesh," says the old chronicler. At last, finding it impossible to remain there hungry and helpless, John withdrew across the borders

in a great rage, leaving those who fell to be buried by the Welsh.

The next year he returned with a greater army and a more cruel mind. Crossing the Conway, he burnt the cathedral at Bangor and seized the Bishop, who was afterwards ransomed for two hundred hawks. It was now Llywelyn's turn to suffer, and, when he saw the English host harrying his land without mercy, he sent his wife Joan to entreat her father for peace. Llywelyn was forced to give up all the land beyond the Conway, to do homage to John, to contribute twenty thousand cattle towards the expenses of the war, and to give twenty-eight hostages, including his own son, as a pledge for his good behaviour.

But Llywelyn did not long remain quiet ; the ink of the treaty was hardly dry before Wales was again on fire. This time he wisely made friends with Gwenwynwyn and the princes of the south, and, calling them together, he reminded them that Wales had always been ruled by a prince of her own blood. "Cast off the yoke," he cried, "let us no longer be slaves." The heart of Cymru was now aflame. "Be of good courage in the slaughter," sang the bards. "Adhere to thy labour. Destroy England, and plunder its multitudes."

Gathering together a mighty host from all the

corners of the land, Llywelyn began to regain the power he had lost, overthrowing John's castles in the north, and making havoc among John's men. When news of Llywelyn's success was brought to the King he was in a terrible rage, and, marching his army to Nottingham, he ordered his men to hang the twenty-eight fair and innocent youths he held as hostages, refusing to eat his dinner till the cruel deed was done. No breach of faith on the part of the Welsh prince could have justified revenge so horrible as this.

John thought to march his forces westwards and utterly destroy the power of the Cymry, but his plans were suddenly checked, for he found himself in the midst of a bitter struggle with his people, whom he had disgusted by his behaviour. All comfort, all security, even civilization itself seemed to have vanished from the land during those years of miserable misrule and blind crime. Every Englishman was ashamed of a sovereign who could demean himself, as John had done, by giving up his crown to the Pope's legate, and consenting to receive it back as a gift from the Pope.

The people of Wales also suffered from the effects of John's misrule. The land had been laid under an interdict, no church bell broke upon the stillness of the air, the churches were

all closed, the dead lay unburied, and outrages and crimes went unpunished. The oppression of the Marcher Lords, who sought to emulate their King in deeds of faithlessness and cruelty, also caused them much distress. At last, unable to endure such lawlessness and violence any longer, the Welsh princes came to Llywelyn and, taking the oath of allegiance, called upon him to lead them against their oppressors, determined to fight to the death in the cause of liberty.

Llywelyn was now the leader of the whole Welsh nation, triumphant from Snowdon to the borders of Pembroke and the frontier of Glamorgan. The hopes of Wales rose high, for such strength had not been known since the Normans began to harass the land. The bards who crowded to the Court made songs in Llywelyn's praise. "He is the emperor and sovereign of sea and land," they sang. "He is the joy of armies, the honour of his country, and his country's strongest shield."

Ne'er was such a warrior seen,
With heart so brave and gallant mien ;
Kings have learnt his power to dread ;
Kings have felt his arm and fled ;
Far is heard Llywelyn's name,
Resounded by the trump of Fame.

The English barons were now in open revolt against their King, and though Llywelyn,

remembering the ravages of the Marcher Lords, hated the barons in his heart, he was too great a statesman to take the side of the King against them now. The Pope removed the interdict from Wales, and released the Welsh princes from their allegiance to John. Llywelyn then marched to Beaupre in Glamorganshire, where he met the Marcher Lords to draw up a draft of the famous charter, introducing into it the spirit of the best of Hywel Dda's laws. The Lord of Glamorgan then took the draft and submitted it to a meeting of the barons of England at Bury St Edmunds. From there it was carried to the King at Runnymede, and at last John, threatened on all sides, submitted and signed the Great Charter in which Llywelyn's name was set down as one who was to receive justice from the King.

This was the greatest act which Llywelyn the Great brought about, not only for Wales, but for the whole human race. Llywelyn should figure prominently in the history of England as well as in that of Cymru at this period, for without his aid the barons of England could never have gained that first great step in the freedom of the British people. If John could have won Llywelyn's support against the barons he would not have submitted at Runnymede. And further, the barons themselves

would have hesitated to take the field against the King if Llywelyn had been free to ravage their lands and burn their castles.

William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, endeavoured to reconcile the King and his barons after the signing of the Charter, but while he sought in the reconciliation a victory for the King, Llywelyn was equally as determined upon a victory for the barons. The accession of the young King, however, dealt a death-blow to Llywelyn's plans. When Prince Louis of France landed in England, and summoned the men of the land to do honour to him, many barons hastened to meet him. The Earl of Pembroke, however, appealed to the patriotism of the barons with success, and news was soon brought to Llywelyn of the defeat of the rebellious barons and the French at Lincoln.

Llywelyn went to Winchester to do homage to the boy King Henry III, and sent his son to live at the English Court with his uncle. Still the struggle went on and there seemed no prospect of peace for Wales or England while Llywelyn ruled. William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, died, and was succeeded as regent for the young King by his son, also William Marshall. The Marshalls, as the representatives of the King's power in Wales, were inevitably the centre of opposition to Llywelyn, who

unfortunately quarrelled with the new Earl, and all the old feuds between North and South Wales broke out again. Strongholds were overthrown, and many of the Welsh in the south were slain.

At this time dissension arose between Llywelyn and his son Gruffydd, who, discontented with his father's treatment, took up arms and refused to submit when commanded to appear before his royal sire. This made Llywelyn very unhappy, but he was determined to curb the rebellious spirit of his son, and had him cast into prison. In course of time father and son were reconciled, and we find Gruffydd marching to support his father against William Marshall at Kidwelly. Henry endeavoured to settle the dispute between Llywelyn and Marshall, but some years passed before they laid down their quarrel.

War soon afterwards broke out between Llywelyn and King Henry, and the closing years of the hero's life are little more than a record of struggles against the English, during which he succeeded in keeping the bounds of Gwynedd clear of the enemy. In 1234 Llywelyn engaged in his last battles with the English as the ally of Richard Marshall, son of his old enemy. The English barons were much displeased at the conduct of the King in filling his

Court with foreigners, and placing them in important positions in the State. Richard Marshall had been one of the first to complain openly, and he now led the barons who refused to submit to the King until the foreign favourites had been dismissed.

The King ordered his men to plunder the estates and pillage the dwellings of the disloyal barons. He then marched an army into Wales. Llywelyn and Marshall took the castles of Abergavenny and Cardiff, and defeated the King's forces at Grossmont. Henry was weary of the struggle, and, dismayed at the overthrow of the warden of the Marches, whom he had appointed to carry on the fight, he withdrew to Winchester, leaving Llywelyn in undisputed possession of his lands. This was Llywelyn's great finishing stroke, and left him in possession of all the conquests he had made, and with the liberties of Gwynedd once more made good.

Llywelyn, being now advanced in years, and already partly paralysed, became anxious about a successor. He had set his heart upon the succession of his son David, for the conduct of Gruffydd, his other son, as we have seen, had not been pleasing to him. Calling together the chieftains of the land at the monastery of Strata Florida in the time of harvest 1238, he made them swear allegiance to David as his

successor. Then, weary and spent after his life of activity and warfare for his native land, he sought quiet for his declining days in the monastery of Aberconway, where he died on 11th April 1240.

Well might the bards break into weeping ; the greatest of the native rulers of Wales lay numbered with the dead. "He ruled his enemies with sword and shield," writes a historian of the period. "He kept good peace with the monks, providing food and clothing for those who made themselves poor for Christ's sake. By his wars he enlarged the boundaries of his dominions. He gave good justice to all men, and attracted all to his service."

Other heroes of Cymru were equally warlike, but no prince ever carried a realm through more troublous times, and preserved the ancient liberties of the land against such forces as were opposed to him. He was sufficiently long-sighted to perceive the two chief causes of the weakness of Wales—the disputes about succession to power and the division of territory—and by his Great Council of Chiefs, who were to settle these matters, he hoped to put an end to them. But, unfortunately for his country, his grand ideal was to die with him.

From Llywelyn's time the despised name of Cymry was no longer a reproach, but a term of

honour to be placed above the proud name of Britons. "The chiefs no longer justified their independence and their aggression by their British descent. They were now 'Princes of Cymru,' members of Llywelyn's Council, owning allegiance to their great Cymric chief." By his life and his works, his wisdom and his valour, this "impeller of armies," "eagle of warriors," "manliest of men," and "tender-hearted Prince" justly earned his proud title—Llywelyn the Great.

XII. Llywelyn the Last

WHEN Llywelyn the Great released Gruffydd from prison he gave him the wild promontory of Llein, one of the finest and boldest in Wales, for his home. It is a romantic and historic spot, and at its extreme end stands the celebrated and mysterious Island of Bardsey, where David of old and saints of the early Christian Church sought seclusion and sanctuary. Here, about the year 1235, a child was born who was to become one of the grandest heroes Wales ever possessed. When Llywelyn was six years old his father, Gruffydd, was sent as a prisoner to the Tower of London, but the young lad was left to play amongst the mountains of his homeland. One night, despairing of release, Gruffydd made a rope of the bed-clothes and curtains of his chamber and let himself down through a window, but the rope was too frail to bear his weight, for he was stout and heavy, and, falling to the ground, he was instantly killed.

Gruffydd left four sons, and when their uncle, David, died in 1146 the nobility chose Llywelyn

and Owain the Red as their rulers. The two lads, grandsons of Llywelyn the Great, shared Gwynedd between them without consulting Henry III, who became very angry, for, amongst other acts which had made David unpopular, he had entered into an agreement with the English King that, if he died childless, Henry should be his heir and take the country. Henry sent a large army to uphold his claim to David's possessions, and the young princes were driven to the mountains. In the end they had to do homage to the King at Woodstock, and agree to give up their land, except that portion of Gwynedd that lay west of the Conway and north of the Dovey. This was a heavy blow to the Cymry.

Before many years had passed the people began to see that another great leader had arisen in Cymru, and the hearts of all were drawn to him. Llywelyn's brothers became jealous of his growing power and in 1254 rebelled against him, gathering their forces to slay him or drive him from the country. The brothers met, and, after a fierce battle, Llywelyn's army prevailed. Owain was taken prisoner, but David fled to England, there to plot against his more powerful brother. Llywelyn was thus left as the sole prince in Gwynedd.

When the English saw that the Cymry were troubled with wars at home they began to

oppress them again, and young Llywelyn was soon to be brought against the great foe of his life. Prince Edward of England had been made Earl of Chester, and his father had given him extensive lands in Wales, which included the eastern half of Gwynedd. Edward was too young to govern these possessions himself, so they were placed in charge of an official who had already made himself hated in England and in Scotland by his ruthless oppression. He soon had the wretched inhabitants of the district under his cruel and greedy officers, who treated them in a most shameful manner. At last, maddened by oppression and injustice, they determined to endure this life no longer. Their aching hearts turned to the young prince of Gwynedd as their champion, and, making their way to his Court, they besought him to lead them to battle for freedom or death.

“We prefer to die honourably in the field,” they said, “to being enslaved at the will and pleasure of strangers.” Llywelyn knew that if he hearkened to their pleadings he must risk country, life, and all that was dear to him, but, casting all thoughts and feelings from him but pity for their sufferings and a bold determination to fight to the death for the freedom of his beloved Cymru, he consented to lead them forth. “Thus far,” he cried, “the Lord God

of Hosts hath helped us ; His eye hath seen our affliction. From this moment our all is at stake ; if we fall into the hands of the English we may expect no mercy. Let us stand firm to each other. It is our union alone that can make us invincible.”

The spirit which these oppressed Welsh chieftains had shown was pleasing to Llywelyn, and he did not delay to carry out his plan that was to bring them redress of their grievances, and at the same time rid the country of intruders whose presence threatened the security of his throne. Calling the men of the north to arms, he marched forth, and in a single week recovered from the enemy all the conquests they had made in North Wales. The decisive advantage which Llywelyn thus gained encouraged him to march against the treacherous princes of the south.

He passed like a flame of fire through the land so that none might resist him. The traitor Gruffydd was driven from Powys though he had assistance from his Norman allies. By this time Henry of England had sent an army to assist Rhys the Little, another traitor prince of the south. Llywelyn met Rhys at Dynevor, and a fierce encounter between the two armies resulted in a signal victory for Llywelyn, whose opponents made a hasty retreat, leaving more

than two thousand warriors slain on the field of battle.

The victorious prince pressed on through Dyved, storming castles, driving out enemies, and encouraging the Cymry who were loyal. Llywelyn had now gained the complete mastery of the south, and all the chieftains flocked round the brave leader in whom they recognized a faithful patriot and supporter of the struggle for national independence. An English chronicler, writing at this time, declared that the "North Welsh and South Welsh were wholly knit together as they had never been before." Llywelyn was now as powerful in the land as his valiant grandfather had been, and in the same year he set up once more the council of chiefs and wise men that Llywelyn the Great had struggled so hard to bring into existence.

On his return to Gwynedd Llywelyn encountered Prince Edward, whom he compelled to make a swift retreat. The personal disgrace which was thus brought upon the English prince, may explain the fierce hatred with which he pursued the Welsh in the long struggle that was to end in the death of Llywelyn and the loss of Welsh freedom.

The Welsh triumph aroused the anger of Prince Edward and his royal father, and they lost no time in bringing an army against

Llywelyn. But the expedition was fruitless, for the Welsh prince, gathering together his followers with their families, their flocks and their herds, retired to the strongholds of Snowdon. As he marched towards the mountains he caused all the bridges to be destroyed, all the fords to be obstructed and all the meadows to be ploughed up in order to hinder the advance of the English host.

The English were baffled by these plans, and, as they stood gazing at the rugged mountains that rose threateningly before them, they saw that it was hopeless to attempt to penetrate the trackless slopes of Snowdon. Henry was therefore forced to return to England, and on his arrival his anger and disappointment threw him into a fever. A truce was signed, but the struggle continued in the Marches and Llywelyn was able to extend and strengthen his power. His sovereignty was undisputed, and when he took a new title, "Prince of Wales," all the chiefs of Cymru agreed to it. He was the first and the last Welsh prince to receive this title, so there has been but one Welsh Prince of Wales.

If Llywelyn had made enemies across the border, he also made noble friends. When Simon de Montfort, whose heroic story you know from your English history, stood forth with the barons against the unworthy King

Henry, Llywelyn became his strong ally. He helped him with men and money in his struggle against the King, and when Henry III fell into De Montfort's hands at Lewes, the latter stipulated as one of the conditions of peace that Llywelyn should be recognized as Prince of Wales and left in possession of his conquests, and that the barons of Wales should do homage to him.

At a later stage in the struggle the fortunes of war drove De Montfort to Wales, where Llywelyn gave him every assistance in return for his promise to recognize the independence of Wales, and to surrender the castles of Harwarden, Mold and Montgomery. At the same time Simon promised his daughter Eleanor's hand in marriage to the Welsh prince. This allegiance with Earl Simon aroused the anger of the Marcher Lords, who raised the standard of revolt.

Prince Edward marched to their assistance, but De Montfort and Llywelyn scattered the Royalist forces in Montgomery. In the midst of his splendid triumphs De Montfort was hastily summoned across the Severn by his sons, who were exposed to danger at Kenilworth. Prince Edward overtook him at Evesham, and there the champion of liberty fell, sword in hand. This was a heavy blow to Wales, for by his

death Llywelyn lost a great ally ; he went on fighting, however, till 1267, when he was offered favourable terms of peace. He was to retain the title Prince of Wales, and to receive the homage of the Welsh chiefs and barons, while he himself was to do homage to the English King. For five years after this there was quiet in the land.

The heroic Welsh prince was now at peace to dream about the future of his beloved Cymru. As he wandered through the lonely and romantic glens of his native mountains, where the fearless eagles swooped down from Snowdon's sun-kissed heights to the shadowy valleys beneath, what brilliant visions must have passed before his mind. He must have felt that at last it was to be given him to secure the realization of his noblest ideals.

For more than eight hundred years the Cymry had kept alive their proud national spirit, and had fought valiantly to cast off the galling bonds of the enemy. Now he was to be their spirited Pendragon, who should lead the united nation against the invaders of their native land, to cast off the English yoke and win for posterity national independence and religious liberty. The day of the Cymry was at hand ; now must they march under the standard of united Wales, and strike the blow for eternal liberty and independence.

While the patriot prince dreamed away the years of calm the great enemy of the nation remained unconquered. The petty jealousies of his subjects, and the perilous dissensions that had, time and again, weakened the nation in its struggle, still remained unquelled. Yet in the days of quiet that heralded the coming storm nothing could shake Llywelyn's faith in the ultimate victory of his race. But even now the tempest was brooding, that was to burst upon them with the accession of Prince Edward, and sweep away national independence for ever.

Edward was in the Holy Land when his father died in 1272, and did not return until two years later. Llywelyn firmly refused to do homage at his coronation and took no notice of Edward's oft-repeated demands, declaring that his life would not be safe at the English Court. In vain did the English King come to Chester to receive the homage due to him, and he returned to England in great anger, his mind filled with a scheme for revenge. Eleanor, Llywelyn's promised bride, who had been a refugee in France since her father fell at Evesham, was returning to Wales to become the wife of the prince. The King gave orders that the vessel conveying her should be seized, and Eleanor was accordingly taken prisoner and sent to Windsor.

Edward asked impossible terms when Llywelyn offered to ransom her, demanding homage and surrender of the lands he had seized as the price to be paid by Llywelyn for his promised bride. Llywelyn's love for Eleanor was ardent and sincere, but the independence of his country was still dearer to him. He firmly refused to pay the price, and there was now no other course but to take up arms.

In 1277 Edward marched an immense army across the border, and Llywelyn, unable to withstand the onslaught of such overwhelming numbers, retreated to the strongholds of Snowdon. The English monarch, though confident of victory, refused to accept the risks of a battle on ground so unfavourable to him, and, blocking every road by which the Welsh could obtain help or food, resolved to starve Llywelyn and his forces rather than fight with them.

Throughout the summer months Llywelyn and his resolute followers remained in the lonely fastnesses of the mountains, awaiting an opportunity to swarm down upon the English. The brave hearts of the Welsh warriors at last began to sink as month succeeded month bringing no prospect of advantage.

Below them lay a sad and depressing scene. In the unmown meadows and fertile plains, now thick with overgrowth, lurked the English host,

hungry for their prey. The cold and unfriendly rains of autumn swept down the mountain-sides, and drove them to seek shelter in the desolate hollows of the cloud-encircled crags. The gnawing pangs of hunger, and the dread of the approaching storms of winter made the bravest heart in the heroic Welsh host quail. At last, in November, starvation forced the "War-wolf of Eryri" to descend from the hills and plead for mercy.

What agony filled the heroic heart of the champion of Welsh independence when he heard the hard terms dictated by the English victor. He was to do homage every year in London to the English King for all his lands, to restore all forfeited lands, and to pay a large tribute. The barons of Wales, excepting the Lords of Snowdon, were to hold their lands from the King; the title of prince was to remain only for his life, and after his death the five Lords of Snowdon also were to hold their lands from the King. In accordance with the terms of the treaty, Llywelyn went with the King to London, attended by several Welsh chieftains.

The next year he married the beautiful Eleanor, and with great joy took her home to his Court at Aber. Two peaceful and happy years spent in his Court, surrounded by faithful friends and loyal bards, who sang the national

songs in the hall, brought back the sunshine that had vanished from his life during the years of gloom and storm. Eleanor laboured to maintain peace between the Welsh prince and the English King, but Llywelyn's happiness was short-lived, for in 1281 the beautiful Lady of Snowdon died, and soon the peace was broken once more.

The oppression of the English had become a burden too heavy to be borne, and when Llywelyn saw the injustice he began to reproach himself for having forgotten the affairs of his nation in the enjoyment of his own happiness. Urged on by the songs of the bards and the prophecies that a "prince born in Wales should be acknowledged king of the whole British Islands," that "one Llywelyn would one day wear the crown of Brutus," Llywelyn rose for his last attack on English power. He became reconciled to his brother David, who returned from the English Court and agreed to join the Welsh against Edward's rule.

Edward was filled with anger when he heard the news, and, gathering together the whole fighting strength of his realm, he resolved that this time he would utterly crush the Welsh. In the face of this greatest invasion of all, Llywelyn once more retreated to the fastnesses of Snowdon. Then, perceiving that Edward

meant to follow his old plan of starving the Welsh out of their stronghold, Llywelyn marched to the south, leaving David to defend the passes of Snowdon. Bearing the sword of victory through the land, he passed into Radnorshire to guard the valley of the Wye with the forces of South Wales.

The prince, attended only by a small body-guard, proceeded to a place on the Wye, near Builth, where he was to meet some Welsh chiefs to discuss the plan of action. While he lay down to sleep in a farm-house in the valley appointed for the meeting, he posted his small troop of eighteen warriors as a guard upon the bridge over the River Ivron that flowed through the valley. Suddenly the enemy came upon them with a great host, and on the first assault Llywelyn's esquire ran to him with news of the struggle on the bridge.

"Are my soldiers in possession of the bridge?" he asked anxiously; and on hearing that they were he calmly replied: "Then I will not stir though the whole power of England were on the other side of the river."

The gallant eighteen, fired with the spirit of their race, fought bravely until the last man fell under the blow of an English sword. Meanwhile the English host had encountered Llywelyn's troops, and for three hours the battle



LLYWELYN IS MORTALLY WOUNDED



raged. At last the Welsh were compelled to give way, and fled, leaving two thousand heroes of the last great struggle for Welsh independence dead on the field.

Boldly emerging from his resting-place, the last prince of the ancient British race, unarmed and unattended, daringly attempted to make his escape and rejoin his troops on the mountains where he had left them. An English horseman came unexpectedly upon him and, seeing only that he was a Welshman, ran his spear through the body of the defenceless Welsh prince and proceeded on his way to join the English host.

As the precious life ebbed slowly away, the prince beheld a friar hastening along the road, and, calling to him with all the strength he could command, he faintly requested that he might be shriven. While the friar was engaged upon his sacred task the English knight returned to plunder his dead. Recognizing the dying man as Llywelyn Prince of Wales, the knight was overcome with joy, and, heedless of the friar's admonitions, and the mortal agony of the prince, he drew his sword and struck off the head of his victim before death had brought unconsciousness. Edward sent the head to London, where it was decorated, in mockery, with a silver crown, and afterwards set upon the highest pinnacle of the Tower of London.

The Welsh nation was plunged into the deepest sorrow and despair at the death of their hero. The "Dragon of Arvon," "the heroic war-wolf of Eryri," "the golden-handed prince," "hero of the red-stained spear," the last great warrior to lead the Cymry in their fight for freedom was slain, and the conquest of Cambria was complete.

Thus fell Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, the last native prince of the Cymry, fighting splendidly to the death against all odds. Leading the Cymry with resolute, undaunted courage, and with indomitable perseverance, in the last long struggle in defence of their national honour and liberty, he chose to meet a cruel and tragic death rather than stay his hand in the fight for his country's cause. The example of the great hero will inspire all generations of Cymry to the end of time, and preserve the memory of "Llywelyn our last helm."

XIII. Davydd ap Gwilym

THE conquest of Wales, destroyed, for a time, that rich poetical feeling which had been the delight and pride of the country in earlier periods of Welsh history. The hopes of the patriot had vanished, and the spirit of the bards was killed, for they had no heroic princes and warriors whom they could flatter with their songs of victory. Rather than tune their lyres to songs of regret and despair, they chose to remain for ever silent. Like the disconsolate Israelites beside the waters of Babylon, they laid aside their harps to weep over the fall of their country.

About the middle of the fourteenth century the voice of the bard was heard again in the land. At this time the greatest poet of Wales arose to lead the bards in a chorus of song. The heroism that, in brighter days, had called forth the lofty strains in praise of the valour of warriors and the patriotism of princes, was now no more ; but Davydd ap Gwilym broke forth into poetry in praise of the beautiful mountains, rivers and woodlands of his country, and the

beauty of nature in all its forms. If the strains were not as spirited as those of old, they were none the less beautiful ; indeed, his poems were so fine that the bards of his day, and those who lived after him, copied and treasured them so that a large number of them can be read to-day.

Davydd was born in Cardiganshire about the year 1340. His father, Gwilym Gam, was related by marriage to Owain Gwynedd, while his mother was sister to a Lord of Cardigan, so the poet could claim an illustrious descent. His uncle, Llywelyn, Lord of Cardigan, first perceived the indications of his wonderful talent, and undertook to educate the lad, sparing no pains to afford the young pupil all the encouragement and assistance in his power. When about the age of fifteen he returned to his parents, but did not long remain at home, for, owing to the constant quarrels that arose between him and his parents and the neighbours, he found it best to leave Cardiganshire.

After many wanderings he at last reached the Court of Ifor Hael at Basalleg in Monmouthshire, where his ready wit soon won a warm welcome for him. Ifor made him his steward, and afterwards appointed him tutor to his only daughter, Morfudd, to whom he soon became very devoted. When Ifor discovered the

attachment that had grown between the poet and his daughter he became exceedingly angry, and immediately sent her to a convent in the island of Anglesey.

Davydd's devotion led him in pursuit of his beloved Morfudd, and, in order to be near her, he obtained a position as servant in a neighbouring monastery. As the months passed he consoled himself by writing delicate poems upon Morfudd's beauty, for these songs were all he had to bestow upon her. After a time he grew weary of this barren enjoyment, and, turning his back upon the monastery, he made his way once more to the Court of his old master, Ifor Hael.

The poems that the bards of an earlier day have left to us are usually written in the form of a three-line verse, or similar forms easy to remember, as was necessary when memory was the book. During his wanderings Davydd had heard the Norman minstrels sing their courtly songs of love in the castles of their lords. The poems which he addressed to Morfudd, and others composed in praise of lovely maidens, were written in a new form of Welsh verse which he based partly upon the songs of the minstrels. The bards who lived after Davydd could do no better than try to imitate his poems, so that this has been a favourite form of verse

with Welsh poets since his day, but none wrote it so well as Davydd.

Davydd was welcomed in every town throughout Wales, and the bards of his day were devoted to him, readily acknowledging him as chief bard. On one occasion an enemy had him cast into prison, but the bards were so fond of him that they collected enough money amongst themselves to pay for his release. While in prison he composed one of his finest poems, an "Ode to the North Wind," of which the following is a translation :—

Bodiless glory of the sky,
That wingless, footless, stern and loud,
Leap'st on thy starry path on high,
And chantest 'mid the mountain cloud ;
Fleet as the wave, and fetterless as light,
Tell to my sinking heart,—“ Mine is the dungeon's night.”

My beauteous native land to me
Is lost, as to the blinded sight !
But despot may not grapple thee,
Thou mock'st the flashing falchion's might ;
And laugh'st amid the citadels of morn,
The shield of pathless rock and frenzied flood to scorn !

Wind of the North ! no craft may chain,
No brand may scorch thy goblin wing,
Thou scatterest with thy giant mane
The leafy palaces of spring ;
And as the naked woodlands droop and soar,
Liftest thy anthem where a thousand forests roar.

Phantom of terror and delight !
Thousands have felt thy airy feet,
When, with wild boyhood's playful sleight
Thou fling'st the breakers' whistling sleet ;
Or—o'er the storm, the oak's dismantled height—
Seekest thy couch of waves, unsearchable as night !

Ap Gwilym did not forget this kindness of the men of Glamorgan, and, to requite it, wrote an address to the sun, in which he requests that luminary to visit Glamorgan, to bless it, and to keep it from harm. The piece concludes with some noble lines something to this effect—

If every strand oppression strong
Should arm against the son of song,
The weary wight would find, I ween,
A welcome in Glamorgan green.

An interesting story is related of a quarrel which arose between Davydd and another poet who was jealous of his fame. Friends brought news to this poet that Davydd was dead, and also informed Davydd that his rival had died. They both believed the reports, and composed a poem in generous praise of their departed comrade. When they afterwards discovered the trick that had been played upon them, and read the fine poems written in praise of themselves, they were very amused, and, forgetting their quarrel, they became firm friends again.

Davydd had the greatest contempt for the monks and friars of his age, and denounced them fearlessly. Their high ideals, their self-sacrifice and their zeal had appealed to many Welsh rulers, but in the fourteenth century they were not what they had been, and their ideals no longer appealed to the people. There thus arose a struggle between the bards and the friars. The friars preached that the world was sinful, and warned the bards of the punishment that awaited them in the hereafter, advising them to cease their love-singing and return to their prayers. The bards, on the other hand, taught a new delight in beauty, whether of maidens, forest glades, or flowers, declaring that their singing was as sacred as the friars' begging.

The closing years of Davydd's life were spent in his native place in North Cardiganshire. His parents, however, were now dead, and he likewise experienced the misery of surviving all of his nearest and dearest friends, including Ifor Hael and Morfudd. Borrow, writing in his *Wild Wales*, laments that lack of space prevents his saying "as much as he could wish about the genius of this wonderful man, the greatest of his country's songsters, well calculated by nature to do honour to the most polished age and the most widely spoken language." The bards, his contemporaries,

and those who succeeded him for several hundred years, were perfectly convinced of his superiority, not only over themselves, but over all the poets of the past ; and one, and a mighty one, old Iolo the bard of Glendower, went so far as to insinuate that after Ap Gwilym it would be of little avail for anyone to make verses.

To Heaven's high place let him depart,
And with him go the minstrel art.

He was buried at Strata Florida, and a yew-tree was planted over his grave, to which Gruffydd Gryg, a brother bard, who was at one time his enemy, but eventually became one of the most ardent of his admirers, addressed an ode, of part of which the following is a paraphrase :—

Thou noble tree, who shelt'rest kind
The dead man's house from winter's wind ;
May lightnings never lay thee low ;
Nor archer cut from thee his bow,
Nor Crispin peel thee pegs to frame ;
But may thou ever bloom the same,
A noble tree the grave to guard
Of Cambria's most illustrious bard !

Davydd ap Gwilym appears to have possessed the graces both of person and mind, and to these were added poetical genius of the highest order

that helped to place him as one of the six great poets of all time. He was not only the foremost bard of the fourteenth century, but also one of the most remarkable men of the age that he lived to adorn.

XIV. Owain Glyndwr

AFTER the death of the last Welsh Prince of Wales, and through the whole of the fourteenth century, there was, in Wales as in England, great social unrest. The conquest of Wales and the break up of the feudal system of landlordism had tended to raise the serf to the position of the freeman. The Black Death, by reducing the number of workers in the land, brought about a scarcity of labourers, and those who survived the plague were thus helped in their struggle against their lords for greater freedom, and were able to demand higher wages. The struggle became very fierce, the lords endeavouring to drag the labourers back into serfdom, and to compel them by law to accept the low wages which they had before received.

The Lollards carried on a widespread agitation against the selfish thoughtlessness of the ruling classes, who vigorously denied the rights of the masses of the people. The burden of taxation, which followed the inglorious termination of Edward III's French war, increased

the spirit of discontent which was fanned by a great literary revival, led by Chaucer in England, and by Davydd ap Gwilym in Wales. The rebellion that had long been smouldering burst into flame in Wales when a Welsh squire, Owain Glyndwr, rose against the encroachment of Lord Grey, an English baron.

After a century of peace, now the standard of revolt had been raised on the banks of the Dee, Welshmen from far and near flocked to Owain's aid, singing with the bard Red Iolo—

Thy high renown shall never fail ;
Owain Glyndwr, the great, the good,
Lord of Glyndyfrdwy's fertile vale,
High-born, princely Owain, hail !

The peasant welcomed him as the friend of the poor, and his protector against the oppression of his lord ; the bards hailed him as the descendant of princes and deliverer of the land. This was the revolt of the south and the Marchlands, especially of the dwellers in towns. Unlike rebellions of the past, it did not break out in Snowdon or Ceredigion, for the people of Llywelyn's country were almost unwilling to rise.

Owain was born in 1359, and strange wonders are said to have happened at his birth. Shake-

speare, who has immortalized his name, makes the Welsh hero say of his birth :

The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes ;
The heavens were all on fire, the earth did tremble.
The goats ran from the mountains, and the herds
Were strangely clamorous in the frightened fields.

He was descended on his father's side from the princes of Powys, and, like most young Welshmen of noble birth after the conquest of Wales, was brought up in England. Unlike the fighting princes of Gwynedd, Owain was not taught to regard the sword before all else, and became as learned in books as he was skilful in warfare.

At London he devoted his time to the study of law, and his national love of books and learning made him a very successful student. When Richard II, still a young lad, ascended the throne, Owain joined the Court at Westminster as a body squire to the King. He did not neglect his military education, however, for we find him following the King to the French wars as his shield-bearer, "bartering his gown for a coat of mail, his flowing wig for a helmet, and his pen for a sword." He was a faithful attendant upon the unfortunate King until his unhappy end, remaining with him during his imprisonment in Flint Castle.

When Richard was at last driven from the

throne by his cousin, Henry IV, and put to death, Owain was glad to retire to his Welsh home at Sycarth in the valley of the Dee, ten miles from his native Glyndyfrdwy. Here he gave up his time to entertaining bards and minstrels in order to encourage music and song. Richard II had conferred the honour of knighthood upon him for his faithful service, and his wealth and lands made him as powerful as the barons of the Marches. He was not to enjoy peace for long, however, for Lord Grey of Ruthin, a jealous neighbour, who had quarrelled with him for the possession of some land, saw in the fall of the King an opportunity to seize the land in dispute.

Thereupon Glyndwr, as the rightful owner, appealed to Parliament against Grey for depriving him of his right. The new King, remembering how Owain had served his enemy, King Richard, sided with Lord Grey. When the Bishop of St Asaph saw that no redress of the wrong was forthcoming, he arose to warn the lords of the danger they incurred by slighting the Welsh complaint. "Take care," he urged, "lest you irritate and provoke the Welsh to a fresh insurrection." But the bishop's advice was unheeded and some of the lords replied: "We do not fear those rascally barefooted people."

Welsh blood boiled at this injustice, and almost in the twinkling of an eye the old spirit, which had been suppressed but not quenched, burst into a fierce flame. Prince and peasant alike longed to throw off the English rule, which they hated with all their hearts, and to make Wales free with Owain as their prince. Welsh scholars at Oxford left their books to join the ranks, labourers hastened to his support with what weapons they could seize, while the farmers sold their flocks in order to purchase arms. Welshmen from all parts streamed across the border to march under his banner, and in a short time Owain had a large army under his command.

Owain was proclaimed Prince of Wales, openly declaring himself a defender of law and liberty, and by September 1400, all North Wales was in revolt. He attacked Ruthin, plundered the town, and left it on fire. Early in the next year he marched through South Wales and seized several castles. The King at this time was engaged in a war with Scotland, and on his way back he heard of the rising in Wales. He marched his army through the country as far as Anglesey in the hope of crushing the Welsh once and for all; but though he burned villages and towns, he failed to secure Owain, and the English army retired after suffering much loss and privation, having gained little or nothing.

The Welsh prince made Plynllimmon his rallying-point, as it was easily accessible for his supporters both from the north and the south. He next marched his men into Herefordshire, where he was opposed by Edmund Mortimer. The Welsh triumphed in the battle, Mortimer was taken prisoner, and hundreds of his warriors were slain. The King now determined to bring the Welsh troubles to an end, and, collecting a large army, he swept through the Marches. As a first preparation he fortified many of the castles of the Marcher Lords, and placed them in charge of trusted supporters. He then marched through South Wales, but Owain repeatedly fell upon the flanks of his army, slaying many of his men, and seizing much of his baggage. The only satisfaction the King could obtain was to burn the abbey of Strata Florida and declare Owain a "rebel."

The year 1402 brought much success for Owain. Marching to the south, the castles of Crickhywel and Abergavenny soon fell before the fury of his warriors, whose warlike spirit had been further roused by the stringent laws against Welshmen, which Henry, in his anger, added to the already intolerable burden. Cardiff castle was sacked, and the bishop's palace at Elandaff burnt. Caerphilly, Dunraven, and other castles fell into Owain's hands, and soon

the whole of Glamorgan was won. The following interesting story, regarding an incident which happened during one of his many visits to the south, is related in one of the chronicles.

When Owain Glyndwr travelled about the country, in the guise of a strange gentleman, attended by one faithful friend in the habit of a servant, and both being unarmed (for no armed person was secure at that time), and going to ascertain the disposition of the inhabitants, he went to the castle of Sir Lawrence Berkerolles, and requested in French a night's reception for himself and servant, which was readily granted, attended by a hearty welcome, the best of everything in the castle being laid before him. So pleased was Sir Lawrence with his friend, that he earnestly pressed him to remain with him for some days, observing that he soon expected to see Owain Glyndwr there; for that he had despatched all his tenants and servants, with many other confidential friends, under an oath of fidelity, through all parts of the country, to seize Owain, who, he was told, had come to that district of the principality; and that he was himself sworn to give honourable rewards to his men who should bring Owain Glyndwr there, either alive or dead.

“It would be very well, indeed,” said Owain,

“to secure that man, were any person able to do so.”

Having remained at Sir Lawrence's castle for four days, Owain thought it would be wise to go his way; therefore, giving his hand to Sir Lawrence, he addressed him thus as he was taking his leave:

“Owain Glyndwr, as a sincere friend, gives his hand to Sir Lawrence Berkerolles, and thanks him for the kindness and gentlemanly reception which he and his friend experienced from him at his castle; and desires to assure him that it will never enter his mind to avenge the intentions of Sir Lawrence towards him; and that he will not, as far as he may, allow such desires to exist in his own memory, nor in the minds of any of his relations and adherents.”

Then he and his servant departed, leaving their host too astonished to lay hands on him, even if he now desired to do so. Sir Lawrence Berkerolles, continues the story, was struck dumb with astonishment, and never afterwards recovered his speech.

Now we must return to Owain's struggle against the power of England. The attention of the English King was engaged with troubles at home, where the Percys, a powerful family in the north, had risen against him, and had



OWAIN TAKES LEAVE OF SIR LAWRENCE

been joined by a band of Scots under Earl Douglas, and Owain was left for a time without opposition from across the border. He was thus free to plan out his schemes for the future of Wales, and, at the outset, was wise enough to see that some permanent form of government must be established if any lasting good was to come from the rising. Revolt alone was not a sufficient foundation upon which to build up the new Wales of which he dreamed. He therefore called together a Welsh Parliament at Machynlleth where he was crowned Prince of Wales. He also determined to make the Welsh Church independent with an Archbishop of St David's at its head, and to set up two universities in the land which should rival Oxford, one in the north and one in the south.

In order to strengthen his power, and safeguard the position of Wales, he next proceeded to make strong alliances. Mortimer's nephew, the Earl of March—the rightful heir to the English crown—was won to his cause, and he then proceeded to ally himself with the French, and with the Percys and Douglas against the King. It was agreed that the rebellious parties should unite against Henry, and divide the country among them, Owain to retain all the land west of the Severn. The Welsh prince set

out for Shrewsbury to meet his allies, but the King and Prince Henry fell upon the Percys and Douglas and utterly defeated them before Owain could join them, and he was compelled to return home.

The French King was the father-in-law of the deposed Richard, and the alliance with him promised much for the Welsh. A French fleet guarded the Welsh coast, and a French army landed at Milford to assist Owain; but in spite of this, one division of the royal army gained a decisive victory over Glyndwr's adherents at Grosmont (Monmouthshire) in the spring of 1405. Many Welsh were slain, and Owain's son Gruffydd was taken prisoner. A couple of months later Owain made a determined effort to release his son from captivity, but the attempt ended disastrously for the Welsh forces, and many were left slain upon the field, including Owain's brother Tudor. Soon after, a civil war broke out in France, and all hope of help from that quarter vanished.

Prince Henry marched an army into North Wales, but Owain struggled on with waning power. Aberystwyth Castle was captured in 1408, and the next year Harlech Castle, Owain's headquarters, fell. The country was well-nigh ruined, and the people, weary of warfare, readily accepted the pardons which were freely offered.

At last Owain found himself deserted except by a few faithful friends. For some years he hid himself among the hills or in the caves on the seashore. At last, when Henry V, who was now King, sent, unasked for, a free pardon by the hands of Owain's own son, it came too late—the last hero of Welsh independence was dead.

Centuries have rolled away since Owain Glyndwr took up the sword in defence of right and liberty, and roused all Wales, by his enlightened patriotism, to noble enthusiasm. Though the English denounced him as a traitor and a rebel, he stands in the history of his race as the champion of the peasant and of education. His ideals still live in the minds of the Cymry, inspiring them in their onward march, and he will remain for ever the greatest and most popular hero of Welsh history.

Mystery surrounds the closing scenes of his life, and many a Welsh churchyard is said to contain his remains. But, however silent history may be, there can be no uncertainty regarding his resting-place. "His grave is known—well known," writes a modern Welsh historian. "It is beside no church, neither under the shadow of any ancient yew. It is in a spot safer and more sacred still. Time shall not touch it; decay shall not dishonour it;

for that grave is in the heart of every true Cymro. There, for ever, from generation unto generation, grey Owain's heart lies dreaming on, dreaming on, safe for ever and for ever."

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